



# INTRODUCTION



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## FRENCH REVOLUTION AND THE LYRICAL BALLADS

William Wordsworth was nineteen when the French Revolution broke out. Strongly attracted by the creed of the revolution he left for Orleans in November, 1791. He visited France earlier in July, 1790. In 1791 he visited "each spot of old or recent fame", heard the orators of the National Assembly, and became an "enthusiast." The fall of the Bastille made him say

Bliss was it in that dawn to be alive

But to be young was very heaven.

It was the heaven dedicated to the realization of liberty, equality and fraternity. The revolution pleaded for the rights of man as man. At Blois he fell under the influence of Michel Beaupuy and took the republican creed as something to be translated in action. He looked forward to a period "when empty pomp should be abolished, when the injustice of power should cease, and when the people should be the framers of the laws under which they lived." The doctrines and the purer passions of the revolution arising from the teaching of Beaupuy transformed his head and heart; and Beaupuy fully converted him to the religion of humanity.

Returning from France in December, 1792, Wordsworth published *Evening Walk* and *The Descriptive Sketches*. Some of the ideas in these poems came from the French poet, Roman de Carbonnieres, though they exhibit the marked traits of the eighteenth century poetic expression. England declared war on France in February, 1793, and Wordsworth sided with France. In *The Prelude* (10 : 263-270) he records his feelings of shame at the thought of his country joining the reactionary states against the Revolution. The behaviour of his country and massacres in France in September, 1792, weighed heavily on him. When the Jacobin leader Robespierre



was killed, his hopes revived. It was during this period of stress and strain that he came to read Godwin's *Political Justice*. Wordsworth was the first victim of Godwin, the last great victim being Shelley.

Following Godwin we find Wordsworth accepting the absolute moral and intellectual fullness of man. In *Guilt and Sorrow* (1794) sin is said to arise from the social institutions. But the fallacy in the reasoning of Godwin came alive to Wordsworth when he composed *The Borderers* (1796). Here is a murder committed. The crime arises from lofty motives. But there is a misapprehension at the back of it. And the poem gives us a counsel of despair.

*The Descriptive Sketches* (1792) bears the stamp of the French Revolution. At this time Wordsworth saw the salvation of man in what was happening in France. By 1796 he found this in Godwin, having lost faith in the French Revolution. He wanted to reveal to the persons disillusioned by the events in France, a new "faith that fails not in all sorrow", a new "principle of joy". In *The Descriptive Sketches* there is a soul in despair wandering aimlessly, and struggling with the passion for Annette, the shock of the French Revolution, and with a religious scepticism. The Revolution meant for him the "return to nature".

The faith in nature led him to believe in the natural goodness of the senses even before he came into touch with Rousseau. His subsequent experiences and reading strengthened this conviction out of which Rousseau developed his philosophy and Wordsworth derived his theory of poetry too.

Rousseau influenced Wordsworth considerably. Even when he recanted his earlier faith, he retained his faith in feeling and intuition, and in a communion with nature. It was Rousseau's call for a return to nature that Wordsworth cherished and preached through a major part of his active career.

Both Rousseau and Wordsworth had a great dislike of the artificial life lived in the cities. Even when the English poet was disillusioned by the march of events in France, he did not give up his faith in nature and liberty. On the other hand, he gave a more abiding interpretation of these concepts. Rousseau saw that the external forms of nature are most human. These forms do not cover the gardens and the meadows. They refer to the sounding cataracts and the tall rocks. These forms are said to provide rest for the weary spirit. They refresh the spirit when the human soul is drawn face to face with the wild freedom of nature and with the most sublime and awful manifesta-

tions of her power. In the next place, the return to nature is an assertion of the great value of the primary human affections and of the dignity of man as man. It also referred to the human need of realising one's own abilities, rights and duties. These ideas of Rousseau found a central place in the poetry of Wordsworth; and in this process they were spiritualised. Out of these ideas arose the poetry of nature, the poetry of man in relation to nature, and the poetry of man in relation to men.

Following Rousseau he believed that the good life depended upon "a free development towards nature", and that the good was to be sought in the self-expression of the general will. Wordsworth loved the shepherds on his native hills, and the revolutionary ardour made him a zealous lover of the new faith in which "human nature" seemed to be "born again". When he recanted and turned to absorb Godwinian ideas, he was forced to "give up moral questions in despair". In the period immediately following it, he understood

Souls that appear to have no depth at all  
To careless eyes.

He began looking up

To Nature and the power of human minds  
To men as they are men within themselves.

The hypochondriacal Wordsworth who was once of a "stiff, moody, and violent temper", disciplined himself and cultivated under the new influences calmness and fortitude. Deprived of a mythology, he stood alone with the universe and contemplated it.

The French Revolution brought a dissatisfaction with the existing scheme of things in society and in literature as well. He developed a questioning mood. He interested himself in the rights of the common people and in their humanity. The law that binds him is well expressed in *Peter Bell*:

Let good men feel the soul of nature,  
And see things as they are.

Wordsworth was able to recant from the revolutionary ardour because in politics he was never a democrat. Napoleon's expansionism upset him, and any revolution meant social disintegration. He said, "I recoil from the very idea of a revolution and am a determined enemy to every species of violence."

In the gloom to which Wordsworth was led by the beginning of 1793, a ray of light came to him from his sister Dorothy. She gave him eyes and ears. Though he speaks of her as having "wild

ecstasies" which have to be "matured into a sober pleasure," in *The Prelude* (14.243-267) he admits what she did to him. She taught him how to discipline his "too reckless" soul. She was "a kind of gentler spring." Dorothy moulded his character :

She gave me eyes, she gave me ears ;  
And humble cares, and delicate fears ;  
A heart, the fountain of sweet tears ;  
And love, and thought, and joy.

Even in 1789, "she seemed a gift then first bestowed." Her eye was extremely "watchful in subtlest observation," said Coleridge. De Quincey spoke of her "exceeding sympathy". She redeemed him from his lethargic aimlessness. (*The Prelude*, 11.333-347). She humanised her brother and gave him tranquillity. She was "an active consoling and inspiring agent" who filled up his blankness.

Dorothy was a kind of poetical conscience to Wordsworth. She was his first public. She tended to exaggerate the value of the commonplace, and to ignore things of larger import. Naturally Wordsworth was led to rate everything he wrote as the best. Still she had acute sensibility, and keen sensitiveness to nature. She supplied the material for many of her brother's poems.

The friendship with Coleridge was the most stimulating event in Wordsworth's life. The poet and his sister in the company of Coleridge became "three people, but one soul". Wordsworth's poetry now begins to grapple with the primary affections and to express "the wisdom of a calm but radiant joy". Coleridge made him develop a faith in his own genius. Poetry, ethics, and psychology were the subjects talked about by Coleridge at this time ; and the poet disillusioned by France and by Godwin was actually in need of these very subjects. Coleridge revealed to him the foundations of English institutions. As Garrod put it, Coleridge was "the guardian angel of Wordsworth's poetical genius". Wordsworth's quarrel with Coleridge in 1805-6 was largely responsible for the decline in Wordsworth's poetic career.

Coleridge offered a rational interpretation of life and things. With the comprehensive sweep of his visions and thoughts, he supplied a secure foundation and quickened the critical powers of the fellow poet. He brought forth an element of ideality which Wordsworth very much needed. More than all this, he gave the earliest appreciation of Wordsworth's powers ; and this was a real source of strength. In 1805 Wordsworth wrote to Beaumont : "Should

Coleridge return, I might have some conversation with him, and go on swimmingly."

Proceeding on foot to the Valley of Rocks, Wordsworth and Coleridge planned to defray the expenses of a tour to Linton by getting a poem published. This plan gradually led to the idea of publishing a volume of *Lyrical Ballads*. The volume has ballads and also lyrics; and Wordsworth admitted his great indebtedness to Percy's *Reliques*.

The Advertisement to the *Lyrical Ballads* of 1798 read: "The majority of the following poems are to be considered as experiments. They were written chiefly with a view to ascertain how far the language of conversation in the middle and lower classes of society is adapted to the purposes of poetic pleasure." The poems aim at presenting "a natural delineation of human passions, human characters, and human incidents". They have the themes of the ballads treated lyrically. A natural subject is taken up from common life and it is transformed by the poet's imagination. The poet aims at giving us truth and life in a language free from the artificial words and devices. The places and the persons are given importance. Then each poem takes its movement from the "elementary feelings", from the "essential passions of the heart", which are fused with the natural scene. In this process he enters into the hearts and the minds of his characters and presents their feelings and thoughts truly and effectively.

In the true ballad manner Wordsworth employs repetition and tries to be exact. There is also the short simile so frequently appearing in the ballads: the babe shall "sing as merry as the birds in spring", and the beloved is "strong and gay and like a rose in June". To this he added his faith in the vitality of the living, spoken language. His words belong to the vocabulary of his characters. But the way he uses them is typically his own. The poetic subject and the poetic language are liberated from the conventional attitudes and practices.

## THEORY OF POETRY

"A poet is a man speaking to men," says Wordsworth. The poet speaks. He is an orator and Wordsworth's poems are *spoken* to a friend or to the reader. *The Prelude* was addressed to Coleridge who heard it. This speaking oratorical voice becomes clear and significant only when the poems of Wordsworth are read aloud. There are the rhetorical devices of repetition, informality, visualisation and the like in these poems. At the same time the poet is recognised to be not different from normal human beings. Even if Wordsworth did not like the widening of the democratic outlook in politics, in poetry he comes to us as the great democrat.

The poet differs from normal human beings not in kind, but in degree. He has a "more than usual organic sensibility" which he cherishes and develops carefully. He has the capacity to receive and understand the impressions derived through the senses. A poet like Wordsworth was gifted with a memory which was "wax to receive and marble to retain". At 73 he could recollect the objects, sense impressions, and feelings he had nearly sixty years earlier. He observed, recollected, and contemplated. Poetry, he said, "takes its origin from emotion recollected in tranquillity." Some of his earlier memories refer to the "spots of time", to his visionary experiences. He did not generally compose a poem soon after he had an experience. He allowed the experience to sink down so that it could be divested of all its accidental features. In a mood of tranquillity he recollects the universal features of the original experience. As he contemplates this, he seeks to recapture something of the original emotion.

The *Descriptive Sketches* written in 1792 had its origin in a walking tour of 1790. This is a peculiarity of his composition. He admits that he was "not used to make a present joy the matter of a

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## THE POET AS TEACHER

Speaking about the function of a poet, Wordsworth states in the first book of *The Recluse* :

If thou, indeed, derive thy light from heaven,  
Then, to the measure of that heaven-born light,  
Shine, poet, in thy place, and be content !

The poet is divinely inspired, and he must be satisfied with his vocation. This is possible if he takes to poetry seriously and earnestly. Naturally he must become a "dedicated spirit", and then he becomes a seer. Wordsworth, accordingly, said : "Every great poet is a teacher. I wish to be considered as a teacher or as nothing else." In order to teach, he had to create the taste for his poetry. This he did by expanding and deepening the range and quality of human sensibility, and by presenting a new truth of nature. Hence he wrote :

On Man, on Nature, and on Human Life  
Musing in solitude, I oft perceive  
Fair trains of imagery before me rise,  
Accompanied by feelings of delight  
Pure, or with no unpleasing sadness mixed;  
And I am conscious of affecting thoughts  
And dear remembrances, whose presence soothes  
Or elevates the Mind, intent to weigh  
The good or evil of our mortal state.  
To these emotions . . . . .

I would give utterance in numerous verse.

Like a seer he would meditate on the nature of the world. Thoughts, memories and images that soothe or elevate the mind then begin flowing into his poetry. The resulting poems would be

Of Truth, of Grandeur, Beauty, Love and Hope—

And melancholy Fear subdued by Faith ;  
 Of blessed consolation in distress ;  
 Of moral strength, and intellectual power ;  
 Of joy in widest commonalty spread ;  
 Of the individual Mind that keeps her own  
 Inviolable retirement, subject there  
 To conscience only, and the law supreme  
 Of that Intelligence which governs all.

The poems are expected to have a religious and moral value and to speak about the loftiness of mind. The laws of nature are to be harmonised with human life. These truths are not to be taught in the manner of the scientist, in an impersonal way. The poet, he says, "rejoices in the presence of truth as our visible friend and hourly companion. Poetry is the breath and finer spirit of all knowledge ; it is the impassioned expression which is on the countenance of all science." The truths must be "felt in the blood and along the heart". They have to be brought into an intimate relation with human life. Then alone can we have a living truth in poetry. In this sense the task of the poet is the same as that of the philosopher. Though Arnold said that "his poetry is the reality and his philosophy the illusion," Arnold did admire Wordsworth's poetry for the noble and profound application of ideas to life ; and "the most essential part of poetic greatness," he said, lies here. Arnold emphasised the poet's "application to his subject, whatever it be, of the ideas 'on man, on nature, and on human life', which he has acquired himself." He saw that these ideas are moral ideas "because human life itself is in a preponderating degree moral." And when Arnold took the philosophy to be an illusion, he was only pointing to the impossibility of talking about the philosophy as unrelated to his poetry. Arnold found Wordsworth's poetry to be capable of offering a moral and a philosophical satisfaction without ceasing to be poetical.

The specific teaching underlying the poetry of Wordsworth lies in directing our sympathy for the peasant and the lowly. There is a "silent sympathy" for these characters who reveal their fortitude and their love of independence. They embody a "natural piety" which he saw clearly in the child. When he said that "the child is father of the man," he emphasised a continuous development moulded and regulated by this piety. Accordingly his leechgatherer lives in "genial faith". He would "pipe a simple song for thinking hearts" and thereby promote human happiness. He sings of the



"joy in widest commonalty spread". He sought to enlarge and illumine the range of human sensibility, and to mould the feelings and perceptions of human beings.

The poet does give pleasure. But it is not any chance pleasure. Wordsworth speaks of the "vital feelings of delight". The "feelings of delight" must have a vitality, they must have a bearing on the principle of life. In this sense, life and pleasure are inseparable. Then he could say :

'tis my faith that every flower -

*Enjoys the air it breathes.*

The cultivation of this pleasure is not unrelated to "the impressive discipline of fear". The Wanderer's communion was "not from terror free". The poet grew up

Fostered alike by beauty and by fear.

The fear is generated by the awareness of unknown modes of being, or by a feeling of violating or corrupting the sanctuary of Nature. Such a feeling made him praise those

Blank misgivings of a creature

Moving about in words not realised,

High instincts before which our mortal Nature

Did tremble, like a guilty Thing surprised.

This sensitivity led him to explore the "hiding-places of man's power" in the primal affections of the humble persons who alone, he believed, "speak a plainer language." His unfortunate women like Betty Foy and Margaret have a limitless capacity for love. Even his children feel their oneness with the unseen. One of the hiding-places of man's power is love.

Wordsworth derived beliefs out of his poetic experiences. He animised the actual world without needing an old or even a new mythology. These beliefs were originally felt on his pulses. The mechanistic philosophy, he said, gave a "universe of death for that which moves with light and life instinct, actual, divine, and true." Since his poetry is to "deal boldly with substantial things," and since he was aware of the capacity of his own mind, he believed that the human mind is capable of co-operating with this "active universe." Talking about the child who is the "inmate of this active universe", he observes in the second book of *The Prelude* :

For feeling has to him imparted power  
That through the growing faculties of sense  
Doth like an agent of one great Mind  
Create, Creator and receiver both,



Working but in alliance with the works  
Which it beholds.

There is the creative power in man. It is other than fancy or day-dreaming. It is "a plastic power" which

Abode with me, a farming hand, at times  
Rebellious, acting in a devious mood,  
A local spirit of his own, at war  
With general tendency, but for the most,  
Subservient strictly to external things  
With which it communed.

It co-operates with the external and thereby creates or forms. The organic union of the mind of man and the external world is productive of truths ; and on the basis of this he would

arouse the sensual from their sleep  
Of Death, and win the vacant and the vain  
To noble raptures.

This he can do because he proclaims :

How exquisitely the individual Mind to the external world  
Is fitted, and how exquisitely too—  
Theme this but little heard of among men—  
The external world is fitted to Mind ;  
And the Creation (by no lower name  
Can it be called) which they with blended might  
Accomplish.

The faculty of imagination is the source of all the beliefs that Wordsworth began expressing. The various beliefs were not consciously formulated. They were shaped more by the imaginative activity. In this sense the philosophy implicit in his poems is a philosophy implicit in the very nature of his imaginative activity. And when he says

a gentle shock of mild surprise  
Has carried far into his heart the voice  
Of mountain torrent,

the expression implies a belief, and it was the poet's own. The greeting of the highland woman was like "a sound of something without place or bound". The "high spear-grass on that wall" conveys into his heart "so still an image of tranquillity". He could then say that poetic imagination records the "ennobling interchange of action from within and from without". He told Lady Beaumont : "There is scarcely one of my poems which does not aim to direct the attention to some moral sentiment. or to

some general principle, or law of thought, or of our intellectual constitution." Wordsworth himself tells us about his *Ode to Duty* that "in his character of philosophical poet having thought of morality as implying in its essence voluntary obedience and producing the effect of order, he transfers in the transport of imagination the law of moral to physical natures, and contemplates through the medium of that order, all modes of existence as subservient to that spirit." Thus even the flowers are visualised as governed by the moral law.

Wordsworth, said Coleridge, is a philosophical poet. Naturalism, humanism, and theism are all blended in his poetry. Then he speaks of "the motherhood of nature, the brotherhood of man, the fatherhood of God", and "the neighbourhood of pain". The thought of the poems is as significant as their music and imagery. And he is an effective teacher primarily because his themes came from personal tragedies, from anguished decisions, and from semi-conscious terrors and ecstasies. The poet's mission is lofty :

If thou, indeed, derive thy light from heaven,  
Then, to the measure of that heavenborn light,  
Shine, poet, in thy place, and be content.

Wordsworth's best poetry is a tender plant growing out of his philosophy. By philosophy is not meant a systematic reasoned outlook on the natural Reality. No poet philosophies in this sense of the term. The philosopher proper observes, thinks, contemplates and argues: But the poet experiences, he participates. There is a strong strain of Locke's empiricism blended with his own idealism in Wordsworth's great poems. The empiricist trend in him made Coleridge say that Wordsworth "treats man as man, a subject of eye, ear, touch, and taste, in contact with all external nature", not "informing the senses from the mind", but "compounding a mind out of the senses". But there is a profound tendency towards Spinozism in him ; and when he became conscious of it in *The Excursion* he tried to explain it away. Starting from *Tintern Abbey* and ending with the *Immortality Ode* he offers a pantheism. These poems have nothing of "the real Christian doctrine in them. In a poem written before 1800 he states :

all beings live with God, themselves  
Are God, existing in the mighty whole,  
As indistinguishable as the cloudless East  
At noon is from the cloudless West, when all  
The hemisphere is one cerulean blue.

He wrote in the Simplon Pass passage :

Our destiny, our being's heart and home  
Is with infinitude, and only there.

In the *Immortality Ode* we have the lines :

The soul that rises with us, our life's star,  
Hath had elsewhere its setting.

And immediately after, we read that,

trailing clouds of glory do we come

From God who is our home.

When the poet said at 73 something contrary to the actual meaning of such lines, he was speaking with, what Coleridge called, "I and my brother the Dean" voice.

Coleridge knew Wordsworth much better than the critics who reject the philosophy of Wordsworth. Coleridge told Richard Sharp : "Wordsworth is a happy man because he is a philosopher, because he knows the intrinsic value of different objects of pursuit, and regulates his wishes in strict subordination to that knowledge." Wordsworth told Lady Beaumont that his poems are meant "to console the afflicted, to add sunshine to day-light by making the happy happier, to teach the young and the gracious of every age to see, to think, and feel, and therefore to become more actively and securely virtuous." Even Arnold speaks of the "healing power" of these poems. Mill took them "to be the very culture of the feelings". It is then not possible to say where his poetry ends and where his philosophy begins. Moreover, as Coleridge remarked, he was "the first and the greatest philosophical poet, the only man who has effected a complete and constant synthesis of thought and feeling and combined them with poetic forms, with the music of pleasurable passion, and with Imagination."

## THE MYSTIC POET

Wordsworth launched the new poetry as early as 1798, and his greatness in this direction is unquestionable. His application of ideas to life drew to him the admiration of one of the best Victorian critics, Matthew Arnold. Truly does Wordsworth sing

Of truth, of grandeur, beauty, love and hope,  
And melancholy fear subdued by faith,  
Of blessed consolations in distress,  
Of moral strength and intellectual power,  
Of joy in widest commonalty spread.—

The theme of his poetry was life as a whole, and he valued his own poetry primarily for the great ethical system he built for himself. But Arnold, in his celebrated introduction to the *Selection from Wordsworth*, has no good word for his philosophy. "His poetry is the reality, his philosophy,—so far, at least, as it may put on the form and habit of 'a scientific step system of thought', and the more that it puts them on,—is the illusion. Perhaps we shall one day learn to make this proposition general, and to say : Poetry is the reality, philosophy the illusion. But in Wordsworth's case, at any rate, we cannot do him justice until we dismiss his formal philosophy." Arnold thus proceeds to reject *The Excursion* along with the *Immortality Ode*, for the Ode itself has "not the character of poetic truth of the best kind ; it has no real solidity". This is the typical outlook which we are to examine on this day.

Near about his tenth year, Wordsworth felt semi-consciously the mysterious power of Nature. This baffled him and made him gradually reflective. The more reflective he grew, the more he came to distrust the intellect of man. He came to realize the importance of imagination and emotion ; and there arose the movement to reconstruct society as the basis of the elementary instincts so that

man can be brought face to face with the elemental urges of nature, and thereby be saved from the artificial and corrupting influences of civilization. As a consequence, Wordsworth developed his peculiar theory of the Imagination. In the Preface to his Poems in 1815, he wrote : "The processes of Imagination are carried on either by conferring additional properties upon an object, or abstracting from it some of those which it actually possesses, and thus enabling it to react upon the mind which hath performed the process, like a new existence." That is, imagination is an analytic process wherewith we can understand the universe in a clear and unsophisticated light ; and at the same time it is creative in so far as it gives us a glimpse into the reality which baffles our intellect.

A plastic power  
 Abode with me, a forming hand at times  
 Rebellious, acting in a devious mood.  
 A local spirit of its own, at war  
 Subservient strictly to the external things  
 With which it communed. An auxiliar light  
 Came from my mind which on the setting sun  
 Bestow'd new splendour, the melodious birds,  
 The gentle breezes, fountains that ran on,  
 Murmuring so sweetly in themselves, obey'd  
 A like dominion. (*The Prelude*, II. 11. 381-392)

This imagination constitutes the creative sensibility of Wordsworth. And this plastic power is all-inclusive. It irradiates the forms we behold or the events we experience. A strange and mysterious halo is cast around the external universe, and the world is seen as though through a vision. And the supremacy of the vision denies the importance of the world of appearances. This is the point of departure, whence Wordsworth slides into the translation of his mystic experiences. It is with reference to such a well-thought-out system that Wordsworth earlier answered the question, "Who is a poet ?" The poet "is a man speaking to men : a man, it is true, endowed with more lively sensibility, more enthusiasm and tenderness, who has a greater knowledge of human nature, and a more comprehensive soul, than are supposed to be common among mankind ; a man more pleased with his own passions and volitions and, who rejoices more than other men in the spirit of life that is in him ; delighting to contemplate similar volitions and passions as manifested in the goings on of the Universe, and habitually impelled to create them where he does not find them." The poet here has become a mystic and a

philosopher. And the utterances of such a Poet are the highest expressions of the mystic intuitions, in spite of all the ethical systems which Leslie Stephen might construct from these poems, and in spite of the jeering remarks on the philosophic outlook of Wordsworth.

By the year 1797 Wordsworth and Coleridge arrived at the conclusion that Poetry is a kind of Philosophy, a kind of Religion. And the Imagination of the Poet reveals the truths of this Religion to the world at large. Poetry, therefore, is the revelation of Truth. And this idea led to the rebellion against the poetic subjects and against the poetic diction. However, Wordsworth recognised that the most important thing in Poetry is the poet's vision ; and any subject can be poetical if only it is surcharged with the imagination of the poet. Thus he was led to the insistence on the "vision and the faculty divine." The Cuckoo appeared to him to be "no bird, but an invisible thing, a Voice, a mystery." It brings unto him "a tale of visionary hours" ; and the earth is "an unsubstantial, faery place". The Skylark is the "Ethereal minstrel, pilgrim of the sky." And it is "true to the kinder points of heaven and home." Throughout he was pining after

The light that never was on sea or land,

The consecration, and the Poet's dream—

In his solitary contemplations among his native mountains, he developed the pantheistic attitude to Nature. He felt the presence of the spirit everywhere. Every flower, he tells us, enjoys the air it breathes ;

To me the meanest flower that blows can give

Thoughts that do often lie too deep for tears.

His delight in the natural objects was only a stepping-stone towards the philosophical view of Nature. And this led him to develop a positive religious creed. He learnt

To look on Nature, not as in the hour

Of thoughtless youth ; but hearing often times

The still sad music of humanity,

Nor harsh nor grating, though of ample power

To chasten and subdue. And I have felt

A presence that disturbs me with joy

Of elevated thoughts ; a sense sublime

Of something far more deeply interfused,

Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns,

And the round ocean and the living air

And the blue sky . . . . .

And rolls through all things.

The apprehension of a Reality underlying the appearances is the vital element of mysticism. And yet this Reality must be closely connected with this world of ours. For the mystic strives after that Reality only when he is dejected with this empirical universe, which Universe he is not willing to give up. Hence in "that serene and blessed mood," the mystic is gently led by affections to a state of trance and becomes "a living soul";

While with an eye made quiet by the power  
Of harmony, and the deep power of joy,  
We see into the life of things.

The mystic passes through the stages of dejection, self-illumination, and an infinite yearning for the unknown, bordering on ecstasy. It is generally held that Wordsworth was immune to the aspect of suffering. But the beautiful *Lucy* poems are a monumental example of the undertone of sadness in much that he wrote at the height of his poetic career. But the note of pathos is too personal and too intense. For Wordsworth was by nature melancholic and with the help of the new outlook he was trying his best to overcome this mood of dejection. In *The Excursion* he was consciously aiming at a harmony between his personal despondency and the spiritual happiness. And in his Continental tour,

Amid this dance of objects sadness steals  
O'er the defrauded heart.

This tone of sadness creeps in at many places. Even his sublime poems are not free from it. Further it appears as though these poems are valuable to us precisely because the poet proceeds from the moment of anguish. And this anguish is responsible for the various changes in his attitude to man and for the reflective or introspective moments of his life.

This conviction is reflected not only in the profound distrust of the empirical universe, but in the sad longing for the happy past. This feeling, this yearning, is typical of one of the advanced stages of mysticism, when the mystic alternates between the exultations and dejections. And the poem on the *Cuckoo* and the famous *Immortality Ode* are the supreme expressions of this state. And they are the pieces which make us worship Wordsworth. They are valuable to us not because they are philosophic, but because here we transcend the distinctions which separate Poetry from Philosophy and Religion. Here we are in a new region altogether. It is a land where poetry, philosophy, religion and mysticism join hands to give us the best expression of one of the noblest experiences which are



true ; for these and similar experiences appeal to our primary affections and emotions.

Here Wordsworth draws our attention to the natural piety of childhood. And a moment's reflection on this state will convince everyone of the significance of this experience. The material universe disappears in those visionary hours. This vanishing is a higher and more certain truth. Here the sensations are not dependent on the poet's senses ; and, therefore, they are more sacred. That is, sensations will not give us an insight into the universe as long as they are in contact with the bare physical universe as such. The visionary experience of childhood is the light, the creative sensibility, with which we half-create and half-perceive the mighty world. In *The Prelude* he tells that all grandeur in things perceived is a quality with which they are invested by the powers of the Soul, by Love, by Imagination.

I seemed to gain clear sight  
Of a new world . . . .  
. . . . as ruled by those fixed laws  
Whence spiritual dignity originates.  
Which do both give it being and maintain  
A balance, an ennobling interchange  
Of action from without and from within ;  
The excellence, pure function, and best power  
Both of the object seen, and eye that sees.

(*The Prelude*, XIII. II. 368-387)

The high-wrought emotions, therefore, bring forth a great transformation, an illumination, and hence "most worthy then of trust when most intense." This is called Spiritual Love or Imagination which provides "faith in life endless," and which is "the sustaining thought of human being, eternity and God." Such a state arises primarily because the mind is no "mere pensioner on outward forms" ; and Nature is "more potent" only when it is associated "with an appropriate human centre". And the glory of the Soul, says Wordsworth, breaks forth "when the light of sense goes out, but with a flash that has revealed the invisible world." Even the sound of the world is only God's voice perceptible to the senses. So he was pleased to recognise in Nature and the language of the sense, the anchor of his purest thoughts.

There lies the soul of all his moral being. In *The Excursion* we are told that man learns his duties from all forms presented to him. Contemplating those natural objects that "excite no morbid



passions, no inquietude, no vengeance, and no hatred . . . one needs must feel the joy" of the "pure principle of love". "A holy tenderness will pervade his frame." He "seeks for good, and finds the good he seeks."

Wordsworth offers an enlargement of the sensibilities by awakening in us those feelings that are primal and that have been at the very core of our being. His mysticism is mainly concerned with those affections and "shadowy recollections",

Which, be they what they may,  
Are yet the fountain-light of all our day,  
Are yet a master-light of all our seeing ;  
Uphold us, cherish, and have power to make  
Our noisy years seem moments in the being  
Of the eternal silence.

These truths arise in that mood and are unperishable, precisely because listlessness and mad endeavour fail to touch them. And our souls "have sight of that immortal sea which brought us hither." And this is possible in solitude. Wordsworth is chiefly the poet of solitude. All his great and lovely poems have this note of solitude. His *Solitary Reaper*, *Highland Girl*, *Daffodils* are all touched with loneliness. Silence fills his heart with sadness and he utters notes of gladness to chase it away. A still and holy softness twines round Yarrow. Lucy lived unknown. And

No motion has she now, no force ;  
She neither hears nor sees ;  
Roll'd round in earth's diurnal course  
With rocks, and stones, and trees.

The solitude of nature or of humanity is almost sublimely pathetic. Accordingly the subjects he has selected are fascinating enough. Here we have people of total significance : the outcast, the maimed, the defective, the betrayed, and the solitary. Humanity in all the lowly aspects finds its place here. The heroes of the earlier poets are dead. And Wordsworth leaves to us the heroism of every individual. Out of this heroism is born the feeling of the independence and integrity of the individual ; for mysticism is an individualistic creed. And this creed is forced on the individual in his solitude. To be alone in a moment of crisis is to receive a moral or intellectual upsurge.

And here he discovered or found it revealed to him that man and Nature are organically related. Man and Nature appeared to

be the manifestations of the same spiritual principle. But their unification can be effected only through contemplation which is fostered by solitude. This solitude does not demand of the individual to run away from society and contemplate in a lonely cave for his own personal ends. Wordsworth's lonely figures are the types and symbols of mankind in a machine age. They feel their loneliness amidst crowds of strangers. In other words, they are lonely because their springs of life are dried up. They are not in touch with humanity at large. Man thereby becomes the wanderer, the dispossessed, the stranger. This is the havoc wrought by time, the great disuniting force. As a result a glory passes from life. The visionary gleam, the glory and the dream are gone.

But Wordsworth's mystic intuition tells him that Time can take away the delight from this universe, but will restore man to his wisdom. This restoration is possible, he tells us, through contemplation, not action. And the ideal set before him is the mystic realisation of being, not doing. It is the development of a particular bent of mind. The mind of man is to be tuned to fix the attention "on the great and universal passions of men, the most general and interesting of their occupations, and the entire world of nature,"—on "the operations of the elements and the appearances of the visible universe, on storm and sunshine, on the revolutions of the seasons, on cold and heat, on loss of friends and kindred, on injuries and resentments, on gratitude and hope, on fear and sorrow."

The poetry of Wordsworth nourishes, kindles, and stimulates these emotions. He saw Nature as the storehouse of all sentiments, excitements, feelings and emotions. He saw man and woman as organic parts of Nature, united to and harmoniously blended with the beauty and grandeur of the Universe. He felt the presence of a Spirit everywhere, and considered every element as the emanation of the divine. And such mystic intuitions

flash upon the inward eye  
Which is the bliss of solitude.

## 5.

### THE VISIONARY

Wordsworth loved the common things in nature and found something uncommon there. The familiar or commonplace object revealed to him a rare or strange aspect. In his moments of vision and ecstasy he had experiences which he sought to express honestly and truthfully. He did not then realise that the conclusions drawn from such statements run against the prevailing Christian Theology. He was only

Contented if he might enjoy  
The things which others understand.

But later he either minimised the importance of such passages or deliberately twisted their meanings. In the *Immortality Ode* we have in the fifth stanza a major reference to the earlier incarnation of the human soul. In old age, he spoke less as a poet but more as a good Christian. The note begins : "I was unable to think of external things as having external existence, and I communed with all that I saw as something not apart from, but inherent in my own immaterial nature." This is the earlier Berkeleyan solipsism with a touch of pantheism. Immediately he shrinks from this and states : "having in the poem regarded it as a presumptive evidence of a prior existence, I think it right to protest against such a conclusion which has given pain to some good and pious persons, that I meant to inculcate such a belief. It is far too shadowy a notion to be recommended to faith as more than an element in our instincts of immortality." And he proceeds to observe that he referred only to "a pre-existent state". Thus the poet-teacher turned into a disciple of the "good and pious persons". But we as students of poetry are concerned with the poems, not with the opinions expressed by the poet outside his poems.

Wordsworth offers the "egotistical sublime", as Keats put it. He had a stern temperament like that of Milton :

to the very going out of youth  
(He) too exclusively esteemed *that* love,  
And sought *that* beauty, which, as Milton says,  
Hath terror in it.

He was always in quest of grandeur, austerity, and sublimity. This mystic attitude made him see everything differently. He was helped by the visionary power and he was

The transitory being that beheld  
This vision.

Everything he saw pointed to something beyond itself. He may start with a sense-experience, but he ends by offering us a spiritual world. The daffodils "dance in glee" and provide a "jocund company". In the lines *To the Cuckoo* he overcomes the tyranny of the senses by visualising the bird as "a wandering voice," an "invisible thing", "a mystery"; and this being brings him "a tale of visionary hours". Here is an awareness and an apprehension of the super-sensuous.

After stating a significant experience during his childhood, he writes in the first book of *The Prelude* :

but after I had seen  
That spectacle, for many days, my brain  
Worked with a dim and undetermined sense  
Of unknown modes of being ; o'er my thoughts  
There hung a darkness, call it solitude  
Or blank desertion. No familiar shapes  
Remained, no pleasant images of trees,  
Of sea or sky, no colours of green fields ;  
But huge and mighty forms, that do not live  
Like living men, moved slowly through the mind  
By day, and were a trouble to my dreams.

These lines read with the ninth stanza of the *Ode* make both the passages of supreme value and interest in understanding the mystical aspect of Wordsworth. It is given in the twelfth book where a boy was always from a crag. There we have

And all the tain,  
The single sheep, ents,  
The single sheep, the one wasted tree,

And the bleak music from that old stone wall,  
 The noise of wood and water, and the mist  
 That on the line of each of those two roads  
 Advanced in such indisputable shapes.

The most natural objects are given here a mysterious significance. The visionary experience suggests the illimitable and it includes and transforms the actual world. When the poet becomes aware of this infinitude, he loses himself into it. At times he stares at the object with a blank mind or with a general shrinking from its presence. He senses the "looks that threaten the profane." That which he visions appears to be remote, but it evokes his wonder and admiration. Thus he speculates on the meaning of the solitary reaper's song. The same feeling is present in *White Doe of Rylstone*, *Hartleap Well*, *Resolution and Independence*, and others.

The meanest flower that blows, says Wordsworth, could give him thoughts that often lie too deep for tears. In *Tintern Abbey* he admits that Nature was the soul of all his moral being. The wanderer was so effected by the story of Margaret

That what we feel of sorrow and despair  
 From ruin and from change, and all the grief  
 The passing shows of Being leave behind,  
 Appeared an idle dream, that could not live  
 Where meditation was.

Everything among the mountains, says the wanderer, breathed immortality. These are passages expressing an original idea with conviction. They are born of a deeply felt experience and there is a mystic tone of experience. The vision makes him feel that he may be dreaming and that the dream is more real. In *To A Highland Girl* he finds the environment look

Like something fashioned in a dream.

A sense of remoteness comes to him, and with that a new awareness, a new experience :

The Being, that is in the clouds and air,  
 That is in the green leaves among the groves,  
 Maintains a deep and reverential care  
 For the unoffending creatures whom he loves.

The old leech-gatherer's voice "was like a stream scarce heard," and the poet felt that he met him "in a dream" or that the man came "from some far region". But we may note,

While he was talking thus, the *lonely* place,  
 The old man's shape, and speech, all troubled me.

There was loneliness, and the spirit of solitude is most congenial to visionary experiences.

The visions of Wordsworth always presuppose the importance of solitude. Even if he were not alone at the time of the experience, he visualises the loneliness. The solitude of *The Solitary Reaper* is not only repeated within the poem, but emphasised in the title. Though he saw the daffodils in the company of his sister, the poem opens with his wandering "lonely as a cloud". Here the vision transforms the bank of a lake into the "margin of a bay". The leech-gatherer is lonely like a cloud and the poet's experience is visionary.

Since the moors and the mountains are charged with solitude, Wordsworth's visions have these as their background. Even in a city he creates a solitude. Poor Susan slides into a reverie. The sleeping London is apostrophised in a sonnet. And the "man from some far region sent" gives him "human strength, by apt admonishment". In the fourth book of *The Prelude* we find an old soldier suddenly seen by the poet in a lonely place :

No living thing appeared in earth or air ;  
And, save the flowing water's peaceful voice,  
Sound there was none.

He was as ghostlike as the leechgatherer, though "his shadow lay, and moved not." Like a true mystic the poet could say in the seventh book,

The face of every one  
That passes by me is a mystery.

That blind beggar becomes a symbol enabling us to know

Both of ourselves and of the universe ;  
And, on the shape of that unmoving man,  
His steadfast gaze and sightless eyes, I gazed,  
As if admonished from another world.

As he proceeds to the Defile of Gondo, he finds

all like workings of one mind, the features  
Of the same face, blossoms upon one tree ;  
Characters of the great Apocalypse,  
The types and symbols of Eternity,  
Of first, and last, and midst, and without end.

Such experiences as these are characteristic of the best that Wordsworth wrote. The illimitable nature of the soul gives rise to such visions ; and the awareness of this nature leads the poet to visualise "one mind" and of his oneness with it. This is the "active principle", the "soul of all the worlds", referred to at the beginning of the ninth book of *The Excursion*. Accordingly he talks of the "acts of immortality in Nature's course" ; and the wanderer attempts to

reveal "far-stretching views of immortality". In the second book of *The Prelude* he tells us that he would

*drink* the visionary power ;  
And deem not profitless those fleeting woods  
Of shadowy exultation.

It is "shadowy" only because the soul  
Remembering how she felt, but what she felt  
Remembering not, retains an obscure sense  
Of possible sublimity, whereto  
With growing faculties she doth aspire,  
With faculties still growing, feeling still  
That whatsoever point they gain, they yet  
Have something to pursue.

This sense of infinity is bound up with wandering, a verb often used in all its synonymous forms by Wordsworth. We have even a Wanderer in *The Excursion*.

The mystic vision, with its faith, came to the poet in the mountains. The wanderer *felt* his faith among the mountains where everything "breathed immortality." The mountains speak :

Two voices are there ; one is of the sea,  
One of the mountains ; each a mighty voice.

As a poet of the mountains which are lonely, he is a poet of solitude. For,

impulses of deeper birth  
Have come to him in solitude.

The truly lonely entity is a spirit. A lonely object thus helps him in his quest for infinity. We have seen "the *single* sheep and the *one* blasted tree". There is the "*one* voice, the *solitary* raven". He sees a shepherd ;

A *solitary* object and sublime,  
Above all height.

There is a poem called *Lucy Gray*, carrying a subtitle *Or Solitude*. She is Lucy Gray who may be seen "upon the *lonesome* wild", and she "sings a *solitary* song."

The solitary is a frequent character communicating a strange mystic fear to us. These mysterious solitary figures include the girl in *The Prelude* XII, the old Comberland Beggar, Margaret, the shepherd Michael, Leonard in the *Brothers*, Ruth, and the forsaken Indian woman. He names the flowers and the birds singly : the Daisy, the Lesser Celandine, the Skylark, the Swan, the Linnet, and the Butterfly. The Solitary figure appears as an apparition. The figure resembles Shakespeare's Lear and Milton's Satan. As it is said,

The mind of man, upturned,  
Is in all natures a strange spectacle,  
In some a hideous one.



## 6

### ATTITUDE TO NATURE

Wordsworth's use of the word "Nature" is not unambiguous. In the *Descriptive Sketches* and in *The Prelude*, 11.31, the word carries Rousseau's idea of the "return to nature". He would use it to mean the external world or our experience of that world. It is also "the elementary principle of unintellectualised goodness in the world of both men and kings". It is other than custom. It is different from formal reason. Till 1793 this Nature was "all in all" to him, and he did not need "any interest unborrowed from the eye". This was the time, he says in the twelfth book of *The Prelude*,

When the bodily eye, in every stage of life  
The most despotic of our senses, gained  
Such strength in me as often held my mind  
In absolute dominion.

He roamed freely seeking a "wider empire for the sight" and he "rejoiced to lay the inner faculties asleep." He was then "insensible"

to the moral power,

The affections and the spirit of the place.

In this condition he came to Tintern in August 1793. ✓

The faith in the natural goodness of the senses gave him experiences where the familiar appeared with an unfamiliar aspect. The unfamiliar is revealed only when the mind is liberated from the tyranny of custom; for custom lies "with a weight heavy as frost and deep almost as life". ✓ It is a moment of liberation from the "film of familiarity and selfish solicitude". The natural goodness of the senses is then capable of taking us to "the fountain-light of all our day". Wordsworth's approach to and understanding of nature was through the senses, particularly through the senses of sight and hearing.



The gospel of the senses considers reason to be the chief enemy.  
Wordsworth attacks the 'meddling intellect' in *The Tables Turned* :

Sweet is the love which nature brings,  
Our meddling intellect  
Missshapes the beauteous forms of things,  
We murder to dissect. ✓

He tells his sister,

One moment now may give us more  
Than years of toiling reason.

Nature is opposed to the intellectual, and the senses are with nature.  
The poet is

Contented if he may enjoy  
The things that others understand.

Confidently he proclaims :

One impulse from a vernal wood  
Will teach you more of man,  
Of moral evil and of good,  
Than all the sages can. ✓

The rationalising sages, philosophers and scientists are inferior to  
the poet who has

The harvest of a quiet eye  
That broods and sleeps on his own heart.

In *Expostulation and Reply* he states more explicitly :

The eye—it cannot choose but see ;  
We cannot bid the ear be still.

The lines written near Tintern proclaim the same gospel based on the senses. The eye and the ear, the two developed and refined senses, are the aesthetic senses. The poet discovers the universe and its significance through these senses. Even Dorothy, he says, "gave me eyes, she gave me ears." And the wilder aspects of nature too appear if only very rarely as in *The Simpton Pass*. In *Tintern Lines* he refers to his "look on nature", he "felt a presence", and he proclaims :

Therefore am I still  
A lover of the meadows and the woods,  
And mountains ; and of all that we behold  
From this green earth ; of all the mighty world  
Of eye and ear,—both what they half create,  
And what perceive ; well pleased to recognise  
In nature and the language of the sense  
The anchor of my purest thoughts, the nurse,

The guide, the guardian of my heart, and soul  
Of all my moral being.

It is the "world of eye and ear" seen from the stand-point of Locke's empiricism. We see a part of the object and presume the other parts by creating or constructing them mentally. Locke's critical realism ultimately leads to the conception of the object as an unknowable thing-in-itself. True to the empiricist tradition, Wordsworth makes nature and the language of the senses the sources of not only sensations, feelings, emotions, and thoughts, but also the "soul of all my moral being". As a Godwinian he "yielded up moral questions in despair." But as an empiricist he discovered the soul of his moral being. The eye and the ear provide an answer to all moral problems. If Godwin banished the affections, the poet restores them to a prominent place. Starting from the "sensations felt in the blood and along the heart" he felt

A presence that disturbs me with the joy  
Of elevated thoughts.

At the apex is the "serene and blessed mood". The senses offer the "visionary gleam" by transcending their own nature. Then "with a flash" there is "revealed the invisible world." At the height of this experience

we are laid asleep

In body, and become a living soul.

It is interesting to arrive at this end because by "return to nature" Wordsworth meant the rejection of the supernatural and the sensational, not the rejection of the spiritual.

Wordsworth observed that the human mind and the world are fitted to each other. As Emerson put it, "Nature is made to conspire with spirit to emancipate us." And the landscapes of Wordsworth are forms within the mind, and also scenes in the external world. The two exist as one. This makes the landscape "hauntingly insubstantial", producing a dramatic tension. Applying spatial metaphors to the mind, he seeks to bridge the gulf between mind and nature. Thus the heart *vibrates*; fountains and rocks *tremble* with sense. He could then observe that there is a mind "in all forms of things".

In this approach joyousness appears to be an essential part of the life of nature. There is an intercommunion of all things in Nature with one another, whence nature's life is a life of love (*Excursion*, 2,694-700). There is an ethical spirit in Nature and she is a severe governess teaching discipline and self-restraint. This

my self -- restraint

spirit is a spirit of wisdom. She is a spirit of solitude, a living spirit. Thus she appears as a young maiden (Lucy) or as a grave, sad, and inarticulate person (Margaret, Leechgatherer).

The wilder aspects of nature appear more sublime. These forms of Nature's beauty and sublimity are the mountains, forests and lakes. They refresh and elevate the human spirit. Wordsworth loved them from his earliest days. These beautiful objects provide a starting point for his meditative thought. In the *Matthew* poems, in *The Yarrow* poems, and elsewhere this meditation appears undergoing a poetical transformation. In *There was a Boy* this frame of mind leads him to an absolute vision. Here he begins with an ordinary boy who is hooting to the silent owls. As the owls respond, there is a silence and the boy hears :

A gentle shock of mild surprise  
Has carried far into his heart the voice  
Of mountain torrents.

He sees the entire scene. Then

The visible scene  
Would enter unawares into his mind,  
With all its solemn imagery, its rocks,  
Its woods, and that uncertain heaven received  
Into the bosom of the steady lake.

The boy assimilates the influences of nature since he had a wise passiveness. He watched and received the melody and the beauty.

In *Tintern Abbey* too there is the external nature setting its influence on the poet. The sounding cataract haunted him like a passion. The poet meditates on the scene and he feels "the still, sad music of humanity". The mind gets back to Nature and it is suddenly faced by a deeper vision of

A presence that disturbs me with the joy  
Of elevated thoughts ; a sense sublime  
Of something far more deeply interfused,  
Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns,  
And the round ocean and the living air,  
And the blue sky, and in the mind of man.

In this cosmic vision he apprehends

A motion and a spirit, that impels  
All thinking things, all objects of all thoughts  
And rolls through all things.

It is a spiritualised nature which points to an essential identity of the outer with the inner. The reality of the Spirit in Nature again

appears in *Nutting*. As he tears a hazel bough, he becomes aware of a pain in the silent trees, and he feels that there is a spirit in the woods. Such a feeling must have come to him because, as Bateson noted, "with nobody left to love him, or to be loved by him, Wordsworth fell in love with Nature."

The flowers are his living companions and guides. Even the meanest flower that blows does give him "thoughts that do often lie too deep for tears." He believed that "every flower enjoys the air it breathes." In the *Tables Turned* he says :

One impulse from a vernal wood  
Will teach you more of man,  
Of moral evil and of good,  
Than all the sages can.

The poet keeps his feet firmly on the ground and his substance, even his sustenance, comes from mother earth.

If one scrupulously obeys nature, one might be led to a life of excess because of the stimulation of the impulses. A little of self-control is necessary, says Wordsworth in his *Ode to Duty*. In *Ruth* we find nature perverting the human being. A similar feature appears in *The Affliction of Margaret*. What is needed is a mood of "wise passiveness" :

Nor less I deem that there are Powers  
Which of themselves our minds impress ;  
That we can feed this mind of ours  
In a wise passiveness.

To derive the best out of such a mood, one needs a powerful memory. Wordsworth's memory was "wax to receive and marble to retain." He could recall in 1843 the Highland girl he saw in 1803. The image of the old man, Simon Lee, was fresh in his mind even after 45 years. The spot he saw when he was 14, he sees again by recollecting at 73. He could remember the object, his sense impressions and his feelings. Thus he could say,

They flash upon the inward eye,  
Which is the bliss of solitude.

Some memories are the "hiding-places of man's power"; and from this position he could observe in the twelfth book of *The Prelude* :

That from thyself it comes, that thou must give :  
Else never canst receive.

Here is a voice given to the most elementary, obscure sensations. Similar voices appear in *There was a Boy*, and *Nutting*.

After he overcame his blind joys and fears, he grew conscious of his love for nature. Nature became a part of his being, without having a sway over his senses. Yet this love was rooted in the senses.

Wordsworth's poetry emphasises the dignity of man and it also stresses the moral and intellectual strength that comes to man out of his communion with nature. The French Revolution talked of the first and Rousseau preached the second. The unique quality of Wordsworth lay in seeing both in man and in nature "the hiding-places of infinite power". This power can be beheld, he says, in a mood of "wise passiveness":

The eye—it cannot choose but see ;  
We cannot bid the ear be still,  
Our bodies feel, where'er they be,  
Against, or with our will.

Nor less I deem that there are Powers  
Which of themselves our minds impress ;  
That we can feed this mind of ours  
In a wise passiveness.

Nature refines the senses and enables the individual to assimilate the best. Passion gets modified by tranquillity and contemplation. This attitude of "watch and receive", of a "wise passiveness" stimulates the zest for living and makes one look ahead to the future serenely. In the "Education of Nature" we find nature appearing as both law and impulse. There is in her an overseeing power that can kindle and restrain. And Lucy will have the calm of mute insensate things. The motions of the storm will mould her form in silent sympathy, while the beauty of the murmuring sound will pass into her soul. All this needs a body and mind willing to receive influences of nature.

In the first stage the religion of nature was negative. It was full of blind joys, fears and vague feelings. At this period he tells us how he felt, not what he felt. Only slowly did this approach gain in depth and intensity.

In the twelfth book of *The Prelude* we are told that the power of nature depends on our minds. The human mind must be active. We receive only what we give. In the earlier poetry the mind is passive. The leechgatherer is motionless as a stone. The tranquil decay of the old Cumberland beggar is fused with the silent processes of nature. *Expostulation* and *Tables Turned* ask us to "watch and

receive." In *Tintern Abbey* the human mind "half creates and half perceives"; and yet it receives the influences

Until, the breath of this corporeal frame  
And even the motions of our human blood  
Almost suspended, we are laid asleep  
In body, and become a living soul.

Memory gives images and leads to brooding. Then dreams arise, followed by the visionary experiences. At this stage there is a sense of remoteness and wonder. Then comes the stage where the mind is discovered to be active. By the time of the *Immortality Ode* Wordsworth came to believe in the creative power of imagination. With this power we can transform nature. This is the Coleridgean approach governed by the anti-empirical Kantian emphasis on the centrality of the subject. Accordingly he says in *The Recluse* :

Not Chaos, not  
The darkest pit of lowest Erebus,  
Nor aught of blinder vacancy, scooped out  
By help of dreams, can breed such fear and awe  
As fall upon us often when we look  
Into our Minds, into the Mind of Man,  
My haunt, and the main region of my song.

Nature then becomes a background or a contrast, and also a refuge or an amalgamation of man with nature. There is a heartfelt piety towards nature, which is best seen in *Hart-Leap Well* where man appears as the kinsman of birds, beasts, plants, and stones.

The scenery of the Cumbrian Hills and Lakes forms the background of Wordsworth's poetry. He loved the common things so well that he found in them something uncommon. The familiar has in it something strange and unique. The most famous nature poems are those dealing with the flowers. There is the Daisy, the "unassuming commonplace of Nature", which stimulates profound thoughts. The lesser celandine has a spectral light as it "stands forth an offering to the blast". The dancing daffodils offer "the bliss of solitude". They suggest or embody some human values. But these flowers do not captivate us by their colours or smells, as they do in Shelley and Keats. The flowers and the trees of Wordsworth are charged with a moral quality, not with a spiritual life. Some of these appear in the singular number as the Celandine, and the Daisy. They show an escapist tendency, a distaste for certain things, and a longing for rest and refreshment in nature.

The landscape of Wordsworth is pensive. The Rainbow reminds him of what he lost and he meditates a natural piety. The melting depths of the sky in *Stepping Westward*, the blank loneliness of the sky in *Stray Pleasures*, and the silence of the sky in *Brougham Castle* have a meditative pathos. We have "the silence that is in the starry sky" and "the sleep that is among the lonely hills". There is a profound observation revealing what we feel. He can even give a loving and minute description as in *The Green Linnet*, or express a simple and pure impression as in *A slumber did my spirit seal*.

Animals and birds did attract Wordsworth, though very few of these appear in his poems. The Cuckoo, the Skylark, and the green linnet are there. The dog, the doe, and the deer compel us to believe that "he came to animals with a mood to learn." He also came with another mood which appears in his remark: "What I should myself most value in my attempts is the spirituality with which I have endeavoured to invest the material universe, and the moral relations under which I have wished to exhibit its most ordinary appearances."



## POETRY OF MAN

At the time of the French Revolution, he tells us, "Nature was then sovereign in my mind." In *The Prelude* (8.349-51) we read :

Until not less  
Than two-and-twenty summers had been told  
Was man in my affections and regard  
Subordinate.

It was in 1791 that man came to interest him, and he left for France a second time in 1792. The tenth book of *The Prelude* takes us to this period. England declared war on France in February, 1793. The September massacres and other events in France and England appear in the next book. Here we have an account of his movement towards Godwin, Spinoza, and Nature. Godwin rejected the general will calling it a new form of tyranny. But he admired Rousseau's *Emite* which speaks of the self-development of the individual in accordance with Nature. Under these influences sometime between 1793 August and 1798 Wordsworth came

To look on Nature, not as in the hour  
Of thoughtless youth, but hearing oftentimes  
The still sad music of humanity.

Man and Nature appeared to be inter-related. The concept of humanity, not that of the individual, is now related to Nature.

Wordsworth speaks of "a grandeur in the beatings of the heart" and of "man and his noble nature". This humanism he saw "in huts where poor men lie". Their humanity is the best realised one because they lived in close communion with "mute insensate things". Wordsworth never lost the solid earth on which he stood. A democrat by conviction, he had a firm sense of the value and destiny of the individual.



The interest in the individual led Wordsworth to deal with one major theme only, and that is the theme of growth. He writes about the growth of children, about his own growth in *Tintern Abbey*, or about the growth of a poet's mind in *The Prelude*. When he lost the earlier feelings, he looked forward to "the faith that looks through death", and sought to cultivate the "philosophic mind". Most of the early lyrics deal with growth. As Carlos Baker observed, "he wishes to show how the mind develops through sense-experience and reflection. Or we may learn through the sudden leap of intuition, the unlooked-for epiphany by which one 'impulse' from a springtime woodland *may* teach the man of sensibility more about how men's minds work than a reading of all the sages." This growth is conditioned by what we "half-perceive and half-create".

The poems of the Alfoxden period present a deep inquisition into the permanent passions of humanity. There is "the wisdom of a calm but radiant joy". The Goslar poems look at man through the memories of childhood, through the various transformations brought about by the subconscious mind. The poems from 1798 to 1807 take us to the poet grappling with the hard facts and with the inscrutable mysteries of human life. In all these stages Nature appears as an escape for man from the ills of the city, as a background or contrast, or as a personification.

Rousseau's observations on the essential dignity and value of the peasant is transformed in Wordsworth's poetry into an emphasis on the simplicity of the rustic and on the value of the primary affections. Wordsworth's characters include peasants, shepherds, beggars, pedlars, waggoners, and a leechgatherer. He gives us Alice Fell, Peter Bell, and the Idiot Boy. In these and other rustics he found that the essential passions of the heart have a better soil where they grow well. This love of the rustic made him speak of the "selection of the real language of men" as the medium of poetic expression. These rustics are always under the direct influence of nature. They are, he says, in hourly communion with the best and the noblest forms of nature. Their moral and spiritual lives are moulded by nature.

"The main region of his song", "his haunt", was the mind of man. This mind excludes war and adventure and it refers to the child and the rustic. Love does not figure here. In *Hart-Leap Well* he said

The moving accident is not my trade  
To freeze the blood, I have no ready arts.

We do not come across adventures, romance, and the like. The themes are familiar, but they are felt deeply and completely in the countryside. His *Stray Pleasures*, *Star-Gazers*, and *Power of Music* turn us away from the cities. *The Reverie of Poor Susan* speaks of the weariness and boredom of the towns. In his sonnet on Westminster Bridge he admires the sleeping London.

A number of the interesting poems deal with the peasants who are intimately bound up with the life of nature. Michael is a typical study of one such significant being. The Leech-gatherer is a resolute and independent man. At the same time we have some poems dealing with characters drawn from classical legend. Such are *Dion*, *Laodamia*, *Ode to Lycoris*, and *The Pillar of Trojan*.

The most convincing characters in Wordsworth are not happy beings. They come from a miserable life. But the greeting of a girl impressed him and he gave *Stepping Westward*. The tour of Scotland in 1803 brought forth some good lyrics about girls. *The Highland girl*, *The Solitary Reaper*, and *She was a Phantom of Delight* belong here. Still he speaks of

The soothing thoughts that spring  
Out of human suffering.

He preserves the "well-flower scents from out the crumbling ruins of fallen pride".

Wordsworth offers a sketch of Coleridge and himself in *Stanzas Written in a Pocket Copy of Thomson's Castle of Indolence*. He could get back to a feudal period of chivalry in *Hart-Leap Well*, *Brougham Castle*, *The Force of Prayer*, and *The White Doe of Rylstone*. But he is more at home in giving expression to the deeply felt joys and sorrows of human beings. In *Alice Fell* we have the picture of a little girl who has lost her cloak; and for Alice the cloak was her only friend. The loss of such a cloak reduced her to poverty and her grief is uncontrollable. Such a grief is sublime. "It is the agony," says Bradley, "of a soul from which something is torn away that was made one with its very being. What does it matter whether the thing is a woman, or a kingdom, or a tattered cloak? It is the passion that counts." He teaches us how

By pain of heart, now checked, and now impelled,  
The intellectual power through word and things  
Went sounding on a dim and perilous way.

The child occupies a prominent place in Wordsworth's poetry. *Lucy Gray*, *We are Seven*, *Alice Fell*, *To H. C.*, *There was a Boy*, the *Lucy Poems*, and the *Immortality Ode* are the most significant

poems here. The child evokes a sense of joy, reverence, and mystery. Believing in nature and in the natural goodness of the senses, he rejected custom which prevents us from seeing things as in themselves they really are. As we get involved more and more in the complexities of life, we come under custom and thereby we move farther and farther from "the fountain-light of all our day". This led him to turn to the simplest phase of experience which is not overshadowed or coloured by custom and familiarity. This he found in the child and in the peasant, in the mad and in the idiotic.

The doctrines of the French Revolution find here a more fruitful application. Wordsworth speaks of a free development in the individual, meets the demand for a simplification, wages a war on custom and class-distinctions, and offers a heaven for those who can accept the faith of the children. Since he set out "to open out the soul of little and familiar things" in nature and in human life, Arnold praised him for "the extraordinary power with which he feels the joy offered to us in nature, the joy offered to us in the simple primary affections and duties."

This restricts the range of themes Wordsworth took up. But Wordsworth himself said :

For I must tread on shadowy ground, must sink  
Deep—and, aloft ascending, breathe in world  
To which the heaven of heavens is but a veil.

Carnage, he said, is the daughter of God. Some of the best poems of Wordsworth deal with pain and sorrow. The themes of some of his great poems are "poverty, crime, insanity, ruined innocence, torturing hopes doomed to extinction, solitary anguish, even despair". It is such a universe that he called the "unintelligible world." Then he could say that "our being rests" on "dark foundations", and that "our haughty life is crowned with darkness."

But in the poetry of man Wordsworth draws our attention to the importance of the primary affections ; and he awakens us to our capacities, rights, and duties. Even if he speaks of our tragic plight, there is no feeble pathos. There is a touching majesty in the lives of Michael, Leechgatherer, and the Happy Warrior. The poet himself said that his "theme" was

No other than the very heart of man.

In *The Cumberland Beggar* we are told that "we have all of us one human heart." In *Michael* he declares that he would speak "on man, the heart of man, and human life". In *Heart-Leap Well* he admits:

'Tis my delight, alone in summer shade  
To pipe a simple song for thinking hearts.

In the great *Ode* he offers

Thanks to the human heart by which we live,  
Thanks to its tenderness, its joys, and fears.

Man is at the very centre of his attention and he never lost touch with man even in the moments of mystic ecstasy.

The poems dealing with man in relation to men include the political sonnets and *The Happy Warrior*. The patriotism of these sonnets repudiates Godwin's ideas. He loved his country with an almost ethical adoration. His country was, in 1803,

the only light  
Of Liberty that yet remains on earth.

National independence and military power, he believed, are useless if there is no freedom of the soul. "The character of his ideal and of this national pride," says Bradley, "is connected with personal traits—impatience of constraint, severity, a certain austere passion, an inclination of the imagination to the sublime." In these 523 sonnets only one is Shakespearian. They talk of patriotism, and of the freedom of the soul. He is impatient of constraint. We find here severity, austere passion, and imagination tending to the sublime. There is a Miltonic grandeur. He lived intensely in the present. The roots of his being were fixed in the great centre called God. The Roman severity of the sonnets reveals his purity of feeling, and pure truthfulness. This links the sonnets with *Laodameia*, *Happy Warrior*, and *Ode to Duty*.

Some of the finest verse of Wordsworth was motivated by social and political passion. Even the French Revolution did not obliterate his love for England. During his stay in Germany he was full of homesickness. This homesickness was for the countryside and for the middle classes of England. The aftermath of the American War of Independence made him react strongly against any war. In *An Evening Walk* he speaks of the widow of the soldier who was "asleep on Bunkestsahernel hill afar." The American War left its shadows in *Guilt and Sorrow* and in *The Ruined Cottage*. After welcoming the French Revolution, he gradually recanted, and by 1802 he treated Napoleonic France as his enemy. Following Milton, he took up the sonnet form to rouse his countrymen. Social injustice, materialism, and tyranny provided the themes.

As country after country fell under the onslaught of Napoleon, Wordsworth wrote :

Another year !—another deadly blow !  
Another mighty empire overthrown !  
And we are left, or shall be left, alone ;  
The last that dare to struggle with the foe.

Carried by a moral conviction and by an integrity of soul, he speaks of his country fighting “with holy glee” against a tyrant. He proclaims the “paramount duty” of hope.

## LOVE AND LYRICISM

During his stay at Orleans Wordsworth came into touch with Paul Vallon and his sister Annette. The austere, puritanical Wordsworth fell in love with Annette, who

wanting yet the name of wife  
Carried about her for a secret grief  
The promise of a mother.

The two moved to Blois and then returned to Orleans. On the 15th of December, 1792, a daughter was born. She was named Anne Caroline. As Herbert Read puts it, "nothing happened comparable in importance with this love affair. It transformed his being; I think that this passion and all its melancholy aftermath was the deepest experience of Wordsworth's life—the emotional complex from which all his subsequent career flows in its intricacy and uncertainty. It was this experience which Wordsworth saw fit to hide—to bury in the most complete secrecy and mark with a long-sustained hypocrisy." Prior to his marriage with Mary Hutchinson he visited Annette and his daughter at Calais, and had probably secured her approval. It was in 1802 September. On one of his walks on the Calais beach with his daughter, there arose the sonnet, "It is a beautiful evening, calm and free." Here we have the lines :

Dear Child ! dear Girl ! that walkest with me here,  
If thou appear untouched by solemn thought,  
Thy nature is not therefore less divine.

About this time Dorothy noted in her *Journal* : "We found Annette and Caroline Chez Madame Avril. We walked by the seashore almost every evening with Annette and Caroline, or William and I alone." The "Dear Child" of the sonnet was Caroline.

According to Harper, Wordsworth's poem *Vandracour and Julia* is an autobiographical poem covering up this part of the poet's

life. It was originally intended to be a part of *The Prelude*. In 1804 April it was a part of the ninth book. But in 1820 it was separated, and it had the note : "The following table was written as an Episode in a work from which its length may perhaps exclude it. The facts are true." In the Fenwick notes he speaks of the source as a narration "from the mouth of a French lady". In spite of a few differences between the actual incidents and those appearing in the poem, there is the same passion involving intrigue, illegitimate birth, forced parting and frustration.

Dorothy preserved her correspondence with Annette, even if Wordsworth's earthly ambitions led him to sacrifice her and forget her. In 1820 Wordsworth was in Paris for 26 days, staying in the same street in which Annette and Caroline were living. It was a grim piece of irony and sarcasm that led Wordsworth to introduce his legally married wife to the unmarried wife. Caroline was married in 1816 and at that time Wordsworth provided an annuity of thirty pounds a year for her ; and in 1835 it was commuted for a total payment of four hundred pounds. Annette died in poverty on 10th January, 1841.

It is significant that most of the great poems by which he is today remembered, were composed during nine years of his separation from Annette, from 1793 to 1802 September. Some of the typical poems of this period have the theme of remorse. Such are *Guilt and Sorrow*, *The Borderers*, and *Margaret*. The second of these poems is a "morbid and monstrous extravagance". The sense of guilt appears in *The Ruined Cottage*. In *The Thorn* we have Martha Ray with her child and both deserted by the husband. In *Ruth* the deserted wife goes crazy. *Her Eyes are Wild* is another. In *The Excursion* we have a pathetic picture of Ellen seduced by her lover and comforted by a child of sin.

*The Prelude* gives us a brief account of this side of the poet's life in France. But *The Excursion* reveals that the poet who speaks as the Solitary considered himself at that time to be one who thought

Old Freedom was a servitude, and they  
The wisest whose opinions stooped the least  
To known restraints.

True freedom must pervade all aspects of life and love becomes a law unto itself. There was a touch of the passionate lover in him. Herbert Read observes : "I think that this passion and all its melancholy aftermath was the deepest experience of Wordsworth's life—



the emotional complex from which all his subsequent career flows in its intricacy and uncertainty."

There are *Lucy* poems which breathe love. They are very few. But they have an intensity and depth. As Harper remarked, "rare and delicate as are the emotions expressed, they disturb us with a sense of hidden raptures and pains, numerous, long-continued, and complex, we feel that the graceful forms which have been so carefully allowed to escape through the iron gates of this man's reserve may be very far from representing the whole family of his love-desires and love-sorrows." An austere self-control prevented him from expressing his love freely and fully; and his passion does not find an adequate expression even in those poems. The poet told Aubrey de Vere: "Had I been a writer of love-poetry, it would have been natural to me to write it with a degree of warmth which would hardly have been approved by my principles, and which might have been undesirable for the reader." Here he admits that he was highly passionate and that he deliberately disciplined his passion because of his self-appointed mission to be a teacher-poet. Possibly this passion constantly reminded him of Annette Vallon whom he wanted, but failed, to forget. He cultivated an innocence, and it is, says Clutton Brock, "like that of a grass-eating animal," for "he is a kind of vegetarian and teetotaller in his very spirit." Instead of the "sun-burnt mirth" and wine of Keats, he offers moonlight and water.

The pathological mind of Wordsworth since the Annette affair came to mix love with the moral attitude of a puritan. *Ruth* and *Margaret* show a wife deserted. In *Laodameia*, the poet speaks through Protesilaus:

The gods approve  
The depth, and not the tumult of the soul;  
A fervent, not ungovernable love.

As Bateson remarked, "In France Wordsworth stepped out of the picturesque in passion and with him English poetry moved from the laws and pleasures of the Augustans into the whirlpools of Romanticism." According to Read and Fausset, the Vallon affair made his life a moral failure, and his poetry an expression of sentimental hypocrisy.

Wordsworth appears to be singularly deficient in the poetry of love. To take an example, there are his lines addressed to his wife. Here we find him praising her:



A perfect woman, nobly planned,  
 To warn, to comfort, and command ;  
 And yet a spirit still, and bright  
 With something of an angel light.

The passion is a little tame, and he is lukewarm as a lover. It is more so when we remember that the poem was originally planned as a tribute to a highland girl. She even becomes a machine. The lyric voice becomes sublyrical. It is reflective and meditative. Shelley called him a "moral eunuch". He never expressed sexual passion. He turned to sexless Nature and refused to be voluptuous even there. The lyrical quality depends more on the associations, on the reverberations. The pure lyrical power is at its highest in the dramatic ballads.

The *Lucy* poems represent an interesting but intriguing aspect of love. They were written at Goslar in 1799. In all these poems we find that a young girl called Lucy is dead. She was brought up by Nature as *The Education of Nature* shows. She was an English girl who lived a lonely life "near the springs of Dove". The poet went to her cottage on horseback when the moon was setting ; and she was just then dying. He was her lover. He was always thinking of her ; and when she died, she became one with Nature. These poems are curiously sexless, though they express a deep and tender affection. Not one friend or admirer of the poet could get from him any illumination on these *Lucy* poems.

The identity of Lucy intrigued the critics. She was said to be Annette, Annette's daughter Caroline, Dorothy, or someone having the features common to all these. These *Lucy* poems express an emotion remembered by the poet at Goslar. The poet refused to say anything on these poems, though he gave copious autobiographical notes on other poems. Evidently these are extremely personal poems. Since Lucy was placed in the neighbourhood of the "springs of Dove," she cannot be Annette or Caroline, unless the poet transformed the original beyond recognition. In Germany he remembers her "turning her wheel beside an English fire."

Coleridge held that Lucy was Dorothy. Referring to the *Lucy* poem, "A slumber did my spirit seal," Coleridge told a friend : "Some months ago Wordsworth transmitted me a most sublime epitaph. Whether it had any reality I cannot say. Most probably, in some gloomier moment, he had fancied the moment in which his sister would die." Coleridge, of all persons, knew Wordsworth best. Wordsworth used the names Lucy and Emma as poetic synonyms of

Dora, a short form for Dorothy, as Hutchinson noted. In *The Sparrow's Nest* and *To a Butterfly* Dorothy is called Emmeline; and we have Emma in *'Tis said that some have died for love*. This last one, thought Harper, was a Lucy poem. Stanzas 10 to 14 of *The Two April Mornings* form an independent Lucy poem, and here she is called Emma.

One poem was transformed into two by Wordsworth. These are *To Louisa* and *To a Young Lady*. The first was placed by the poet immediately before *Strange fits of passion*. The two poems have a connection with the Lucy poems. Thus in addition to the five Lucy poems there are others belonging to the same group. All these Lucy poems raise interesting problems.

Whenever Wordsworth looks at persons near and dear to him, he treats them as parts or aspects of the natural scene. He viewed his sister as an aspect of Nature, as one of the "mute insensate things". The woman becomes a tree, a waterfall, the breath of spring, a faun or huntress or nymph. Coleridge knew *Three years she grew* under the title *Nature's Lady*, and the Wordsworth family knew that *To a Young Lady* ("Dear child of Nature") is addressed to Dorothy. Then *Louisa* of *To Louisa* was his sister.

Coleridge was correct in identifying Lucy with Dorothy. In his dreams and in his imagination the poet was in love with his sister; and Dorothy too loved him deeply. On the day he was married Dorothy had a nervous breakdown. She could not reconcile herself to the idea of her brother getting married to any. And as Bateson remarked, "sooner or later apparently Wordsworth had to kill the thing he loved, even though it was only in poetry." And Wordsworth killed a part of himself when he was married on Oct. 4, 1802. Coleridge's present for that day was the publication of his *Dejection: An Ode*.

## THE ARTIST WORDSWORTH

The first and the last great criticism outlining the characteristic defects and merits of Wordsworth's poetry appears in Coleridge's *Biographia Literaria*. It is not possible to improve upon it. One can only explain or elucidate. If Shakespeare was Coleridge's ideal poet, Wordsworth was his actual poet ; and the actual falls short of the ideal. Yet the actual is what is within the reach of the good poet. Coleridge was therefore pointing out certain defects and excellences which become apparent when we look at Wordsworth only as a poet.

The first defect is an inconstancy of style. From a passage of singular felicity and beauty, Wordsworth suddenly slips into prosaic and dull statements. There is thus a disharmony of style. We can cite *The Emigrant Mother*, *The Blind Highland Boy*, *To a Skylark* and *Resolution and Independence*. This last poem is a good example showing the best and the worst of the poet. The eleventh stanza is beautiful, and the eighteenth is prosaic to the core.

There is a certain matter-of-factness in some poems of Wordsworth. This appears when he labours to portray the details minutely and accurately like a descriptive scientist, or when he introduces accidental features to explain a character or a situation. All this is the result of his adherence to the truth to facts. When truth to fact is overemphasised, it is at the cost of poetic beauty. Then instead of giving pleasure, he begins to teach. He repeats his characters and describes a character or a situation more like a businessman.

The third defect is the undue predilection for the dramatic form. Suddenly he takes up a dramatic tone spoiling the harmony of the style. All the characters speak the same language ; and Coleridge found it to be a variety of ventriloquism. These characters

are given to prolixity and repetition. Their thought has no progression. They are garrulous. As Coleridge remarked, one can reproduce garrulity only by becoming himself garrulous.

The next defect is a kind of mental bombast. The "six years' darling of a pigmy sized" is viewed in the *Immortality Ode* as the "best philosopher", "mighty prophet", and "seer blest". This child becomes "an eye among the blind," and it "reads the eternal deep." This exaggeration is the mental bombast.

The greatest influence that moulded the poetic career of Wordsworth was that of Milton. Both introduce solitary figures. But while Milton's solitary is active and aggressive, Wordsworth's is passive. He does not rebel, nor does he accept anything willingly. He has a peculiar sensation of a strange fear. This solitary is charged with a mystery, with a profound sincerity. Thus we have the grand figures like the soldier (*Prelude*, IV), the beggar (*Prelude*, VII), the girl in the twelfth book, the Cumberland Beggar, the solitary Reaper, Margaret, the leech-gatherer, Lucy Gray, the shepherd Michael, Ruth, and the forsaken Indian woman. Even his flowers and birds come before us single. In all these and other poems the remarkable thing is that the poems of Wordsworth followed his personal experiences. Herein we find the remarkable tone of sincerity, the authentic voice of the experiencing individual.

The first great excellence, noted by Coleridge, is the austere purity of language. This arises from the presence of truth and contemplativeness in the best poems. Speaking about the sonnet *Upon Westminster Bridge*, Bagehot refers to "the compactness of the sonnet and the gravity of the sentiment hedging in the thoughts, restraining the fancy, and helping to maintain a singleness of expression." It is a pure style where we cannot spare any expression and where "not a single expression rivets the attention."

The next excellence is "a corresponding weight and sanity of the thoughts and sentiments, won not from books, but from the poet's own meditation." Even in the smaller poems, says Coleridge, "there is scarcely one which is not rendered valuable by some just and original reflection." Such are the closing lines of *Simon Lee*, stanzas 9 to 14 of *The Fountain*, and the last stanza of the poem on the withered Celandine.

The third excellence is "the sinewy strength and originality of single lines and paragraphs". Next, there is "the perfect truth of nature" in his images and descriptions. These are taken directly

from nature and they breathe a freshness and an intimacy. The image appears to be other than the reality only because it has "greater softness and lustre". What we generally ignore because of our supposed familiarity is revealed clearly and arrestingly. Thus we have the last two stanzas of *The Green Linnet*, *To the Cuckoo*, and *Three Years She Grew*.

Coleridge next refers to the "meditative pathos" of Wordsworth. It is "a union of deep and subtle thought with sensibility ; a sympathy with man as man ; the sympathy indeed of a contemplator, rather than a fellow sufferer." Here is "a contemplator from whose view no difference of rank conceals the sameness of nature, no injuries of wind or weather, or toil, or even of ignorance, wholly disguise the human face divine." Wordsworth has no equal in this kind of pathos.

Finally, Coleridge claims for Wordsworth the supreme gift of imagination. He invests all objects and thoughts with

the gleam,  
The light that never was on sea or land,  
The consecration and the poet's dream.

Such are the closing lines in *The Yew Trees*, the account of the leech-gatherer (lines 127-131), and the fifth and the ninth stanzas of the *Immortality Ode*.

In the 1798 volume he looked outwards and meditated on life. It was a voyage of the discovery of the human soul. In the 1807 volume he broods on his own life. Each poem is an expression of the poet's mood, and it carries its own atmosphere. Now he is concerned with politics, with public affairs. He concentrates his attention on the moral and spiritual life. Wordsworth took life seriously and poetry was "as serious as life". This explains his attention to the *Preface*. In his best poetry, as Coleridge noted, there was "no mark of strained thought, no forced diction, no crowd or turbulence of imagery". Rather we find the "union of deep feeling with profound thought ; the fine balance of truth in observing, with the imaginative faculty in modifying the objects observed."

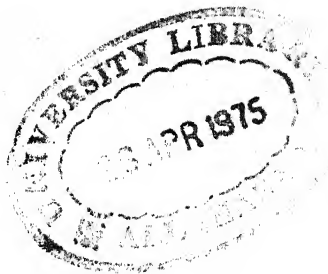
Byron called Wordsworth a "dull disciple" of Southey, and a "mild aspostate" from neoclassicism. Shelley, who was greatly influenced by Wordsworth, said of him :

He had a mind which was somehow  
At once circumference and centre  
Of all he might or feel or know ;  
Nothing went ever out, although

Something did ever enter.  
 He had as much imagination  
 As a pint-pot.

Though this is a little uncharitable, in the same poem Shelley does admit certain virtues :

his was individual mind,  
 And new-created all he saw  
 In a new manner, and refined  
 Those new creations, and combined  
 Them, by a master-spirit's law.  
 Thus, though unimaginative,  
 An apprehension clear, intense,  
 Of his mind's work, had made alive  
 The things it wrought on ; I believe  
 Wakening a sort of thought in sense.



A master-spirit giving us something original, new and individual, and discovering a thought in sense-experience—that was Wordsworth's unique contribution.

But Wordsworth never maintained his unique strength uniformly. He could be sublime and flat not only at different periods of his career, but in the same poem. There is a good sonnet entitled *Thoughts of a Briton on the Subjugation of Switzerland*. J. K. Stephen manipulated this sonnet to reveal these two aspects of Wordsworth :

Two voices are there ; one is of the deep ;  
 It learns the storm-cloud's thunderous melody,  
 Now roars, now murmurs with the changing sea,  
 Now bird-like pipes, now closes soft in sleep ;  
 And one is of an old half-witted sheep  
 Which bleats articulate monotony,  
 And indicates that two and one are three,  
 And grass is green, lakes damp, and mountains steep ;  
 And Wordsworth, both are thine ; at certain times,  
 Forth from the heart of thy melodious rhymes,  
 The form and pressure of high thoughts will burst ;  
 At other times—Good Lord I'd rather be  
 Quite unacquainted with the A B C  
 Than write such hopeless rubbish as thy worst.

At his worst he could be dull, flat, prosaic, egotistic, and humourless ; and his language could be insipid and foolish. There is much

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of what Arnold called "baggage" and what Pater called "debris" in the collected works of Wordsworth.

The texture of his best poems is hard, strong, pure, and natural. There is a naked intensity brought forth by an artless diction. Here the emotion dictates its own rhythm. The words take us into large constructions of experience, as in stanzas 8, 9, and 10 of *Resolution and Independence*. The best poem of Wordsworth is "a highly organised complication of imagery and meaning". But the great poems combine the voice of the man of strong will with the voice of the man of genius and inspiration. Such are *The Prelude*, *Michael*, the *Lucy* poems, and *Resolution and Independence*.

The decline in Wordsworth's poetic career began sometime in 1805. By 1807 the symptoms were clearly visible. And by 1814 the great period came to an end. According to Herbert Read, his affair with Annette gave rise to his own inhibitions whereby his poetical power was reduced to confusion. Garrod held that the decline was due to his separation from Coleridge who was "the guardian angel of Wordsworth's poetical genius." As Garrod puts it, "perhaps Coleridge's greatest work is Wordsworth and, like all his other work, Coleridge left it unfinished. If there was any medicine for the decline of power which stole over Wordsworth after 1807, it was perhaps to be sought from Coleridge. From Coleridge Wordsworth had derived the elements of his metaphysic and his genius died of a metaphysical atrophy." Some have held his marriage to be responsible for the decay. But as Helen Darbishire noted, "the spirit bloweth where it listeth"; and the spirit did not come back to him because it was literally and metaphorically embodied in Coleridge.

In his dedication to *Peter Bell III* Shelley distinguished four stages of Wordsworth's poetic career. At first he was sublime, pathetic, impressive and profound—the *Lyrical Ballads*, 1798. Next he became dull and gave *Poems in Two Volumes*, 1807. In the third stage was *The Excursion*, 1840, when he became prosy and dull. In the fourth stage he is "dull—O, so very dull! it is ultra-legitimate dullness", beginning with the *Thanksgiving Ode*, 1815. There is some justice in this attempt at evaluation.

In the best poems of Wordsworth, says Pater, we can "trace the action of his unique incommunicable faculty, that strange, mystical sense of a life in natural things, and of man's life as a part of nature, drawing strength and colour and character from local

influences, from the hills and streams, and from natural sights and sound . . . . That is the virtue, the active principle in Wordsworth's poetry." Such is the picture of old Michael. So is the way nature sought to fashion Lucy. The lines

And beauty born of murmuring sound  
Shall pass into her face

could not have been written by any other poet. Such lines were the product of a profound reflection on the "inherent and indestructible qualities of the human mind" and on the features inherent in "the great and permanent objects that act" upon the human mind.

Wordsworth's major theme being that of growth, he uses this as a principle of organising his material in the poem. It is a structural device. The present experience is focussed on the remembered past experience. It is the double-exposure technique. In 1798 he goes through Salisbury plain and compares the present with the experience of 1793. The 1798 experience synthesises the two "spots of time" and reveals the advance registered now. The same object is seen in the same background, but at different times. The light in Dorothy's eyes in 1798 reveals what Wordsworth was in 1793: "I behold in thee what I was once." The technique is still carried forward with greater complexity in the *Immortality Ode*. The past state of innocence is intimately viewed from the present state of experience. These two states have their corresponding voices; and these voices contribute largely to the quality of incantation which the poem possesses. There are different scenes and setting corresponding to these two states. This principle appears in many poems as the main organisational device: *The Two April Mornings*, *She was a Phantom of Delight*, *Ode to Duty*, *Composed upon Westminster Bridge*, *Elegiac Stanzas*.

This technique explains the thematic principle of regret implicit in all these lyrics of growth. There is a regret at the disappearance of the past. Something or other is lost during the interval. There is a "Despondency" and Wordsworth will seek to offer "Despondency Corrected" because he knew that life must be accepted and lived.

Wordsworth observed, "I yield to none in love for my art. I therefore labour at it with reverence, affection, and industry." Thus he gave his theory, and he revised his poems carefully. His psychological imagination brings vividly to life the profound forces moulding the personality. Avoiding abstractions, symbols, and myths, he gives a poetry which has bareness, simplicity, loftiness,



and depth. When he uses significant detail, he reveals the potentialities of symbolic detail. His simplicity lies in his inability to separate what he has to say from how he says it.

Wordsworth can handle an exceptionally picturesque scene if it can evoke personal emotions, if the eye and the emotion can be brought together. He works wonders with the background of subjective terror, whence we find a sympathetic self-identification with social outcasts and misfits. These appear upto 1797. Then his poetic range extended and we get recurring metaphors and images that become symbolical. This process which started with *Tintern Abbey* became more systematic in *The Prelude*. Here we find the unification of sensibility.

Wordsworth handled the heroic couplet, the ballad form, and the blank verse successfully. He had a passion for elaborate metrical forms. He was the master of the sonnet form. We find the mastery of the ode and of the pathetic measure. The blank verse in *Tintern Abbey* is nobly sustained, and in *Michael* we have a slow and measured movement. He succeeds best when he is abstract and meditative.

He wrote his poems for the ear. They are rhetorical. This has resulted in the heaviness of sound, in an occasional clumsiness, and in a lack of verbal polish. Tennyson called his verse "thick-ankled". But he achieves the perfection of the form in a poem like the *Daffodils*.

# 10

## IMAGERY

The dominant sense in Wordsworth was that of sight, which he called "the most despotic of the senses". Though he disciplined the tendency towards the epicureanism of the eye, his poems are full of visual images. He penetrates into the very texture of the object to discover its "ideal and essential truth". The moving object is drawn closely. The shepherd in *Fidelity* speaks of "a stirring in a brake of fern". He speaks of

the sailing glead,

The wheeling swallow, and the darting snipe.

With all this awareness, the landscapes appear to have and yet not to have a substantiality. Trying to adhere to the truth of fact, he seeks to express truly the content of his own impressions, not the content of the object given. Though he speaks of yellow flowers too often, and though he describes moving objects, he was attracted more by form and mass. This was because his images took a form only when he recollected the things and brooded on them. And he was greatly helped by the minute attention he paid to the details. The result was a certain matter-of-factness about which Coleridge complained. But this matter-of-factness is greatly relieved by his conviction that objects are dependent on the human mind. As a poet he tries to find a resolution of the conflict between the world as external and the world as a modification of the self. In this light does he freely employ the words image, form, and shape. He talks of the "forms of fear" floating "wild on the shipwreck of the thought", of "the half seen form of twilight" roaming astray, and of "the holy forms of young imagination". The mind and the external world are fused in such expressions.

But it is the imagery of the lakes, rivers, mountains, clouds, and the sky that stands out prominently in his poetry. He is the

poet of the mountains and his imagery is scientifically accurate and poetically impressive. It is not so much the size of a mountain that he captures, as the form, the perspective, the atmosphere. At the same time spatial metaphors are applied to the mind, so that the words "sense" and "form" can be used with reference to mind and also to nature. The object dissolves into the image, and the image into the object. Then he could say that there is a mind "in all forms of things" and that the forms of things are actually shapes in the mind.

Some of the best similes are drawn from the clouds. He "wandered lonely as a cloud," while "motionless as a cloud the old man stood." The knight rides down "with the slow motion of a summer's cloud". Still the sky is

no domain  
For fickle, short-lived clouds to occupy,  
Or to pass through ; but rather an abyss  
In which the everlasting stars abide.

The sky captivates him with its boundlessness. It may not be actual object ; for, in the Fenwick note to *Resolution and Independence* we read, "the image of the hare I then observed on the ridge of the fall." He observed not the hare, but the image of the hare. The observed *image* has a beauty :

Some lovely image in the song rose up  
Full-formed, like Venus rising from the sea.

The object is both visual and visionary, and this is typical of Wordsworth.

There are many effective images of sunrise, sunset, and moonlight. There is a stormy sunset on the lake of Uri in *Descriptive Sketches*. There is an evening of extraordinary splendour giving rise to a fine poem. There is the wanderer

from the naked top  
Of some bold headland, he beheld the sun  
Rise up, and bathe the world in light ! He looked—  
Ocean and earth, the solid frame of earth  
And ocean's liquid mass, in gladness lay  
Beneath him—Far and wide the clouds were touched,  
And in their silent faces could he read  
Unutterable love.

The Solitary beholds the sunrise which is  
Glory beyond all glory ever seen  
By waking sense or by the dreaming soul !

In *The Prelude* the morning emerges "glorious as e'er I had beheld." When vows were made for him, he had the sweetness of the dawn, the mountains shining like the clouds, and the laughter of the sea. The ascent of Snowdon with the appearance of the full moon is a majestic piece. In such images, as Bosanquet observed, the feeling gets into the object; and it gathers substance from ideas and images. The emotion gets objectified:

Their colours and their forms, were then to me

An appetite; a feeling and a love.

The rocks and the woods were the feeling when they were mediated by their images. The preoccupation with the images was so insistent that he often gives us accounts of the reflections of the objects in water.

Wordsworth had a wonderful sense of the three-dimensional space. He has "the solid mountains", "the solid frame of earth", "the round earth", "ocean's liquid mass", "the convex of the watery globe". In a short Lucy poem we have the austere simplicity in the apprehension of the solid earth:

Rolled round in earth's diurnal course

With rocks and stones and trees.

But we should not mistake it to be a three-dimensional object familiar to us. In *She was a Phantom* the woman is a phantom, but she is real like the twilight and like the dawn. Still she "gleamed" upon his sight:

A dancing shape, an Image gay,

To haunt, to startle, and way-lay.

Though she is an actual woman, the poem closes by seeing in her "something of angelic light." She is both substantial and insubstantial. The images have a depth. We have the lines—

on their pictured lines

Intensely brooded, even till they acquired

The liveliness of dreams.

As de Selincourt remarks, "it is generally stated that the images of dreams are vague and indistinct and lack colour. Wordsworth's experience was the opposite." There is a perfect truth of observation and description in these images. When he adheres to the truth of nature and modifies natural objects with the colours of imagination, he does talk in the language of the real, solid images, not in the language of things.

The auditory imagery is not so intense and penetrating as the visual. He was sensitive to the sounds of the wood and of the

water. Sound stimulated his imagination, and such are those produced by the leafy trees and by the rains :

There was a roaring in the wind all night ;

The rain came heavily and fell in floods.

The sound of running water too excited him greatly. But these sounds did not give him any sense of rhythm or melody ; and Coleridge could say that Wordsworth had no ear for music. The music he refers to in *The Solitary Reaper* was the one heard by his friend Wilkinson, not by him. He was alive to the volume of sounds, to their timbre. Thus he speaks of the "faint wail" and "angry barking" of the eagle, the "iron knell" of the raven, the "clang" of the waterfowl, the "frog-like tune" of the night-hawk, and the "two-fold shout" of the Cuckoo. The only kind of rhythm to which he could respond is what he called "the soft *eye-music* of slow-waving boughs." It is visible rhythm. The Mod Mother says,

The breeze I see is in the tree.

In *The Prelude* (7.45-46) we read :

Tossing in sunshine its dark boughs aloft,

As if to make the strong wind visible.

This is not a fanciful image ; he remarked in his 73rd year, "there is not an image in it (*An Evening Walk*) which I have not observed, and now in my 73rd year I recollect the time and place where most of them were noticed." Then quoting a couplet from this poem, he remarked : "The moment was important in my poetical history ; for I date from it my consciousness of the infinite variety of natural appearances which had been unnoticed by the poets—and I made a resolution to supply in some degree the deficiency."

The tactile images of Wordsworth refer to temperature, and also to the sense of pressure. In the eighth book of *The Excursion* we have

the touch, so exquisitely poured

Through the whole body, with a languid will

Performs its function.

It "perceived" "by hand, or foot, or lip, in summer's warmth." The sense of touch brought him back to the actual world, as he lay with

the genial pillow of the earth

Beneath my head, soothed by a sense of touch

From the warm ground, that balanced me.

The landscape is a vehicle of fear in his early poems. In *Tintern* it tends to idealise, to harmonise, to unify. At times, as in

the *Lucy* poems, it becomes one with the person. These processes appear in the images of darkness occurring in *Michael*, *Resolution and Independence*, and *Stepping Westward*. These and similar images do not form the structure or framework of the poem. They are neither complex nor startling. We have the figures of suffering (*Thorn*, *Ruined Cottage*), of the deserted woman (*Laodamia*, *Margaret*), of the child, and of the old man who embodies the human situation (*Resolution*, *Fountain*, *Small Celandine*, *Vale of Esthwaite*). These are solitary, helpless and suffering figures. We have also graphic images of ruins and homes. In all these we find thought, feeling, and imagery constituting one individual whole.

Of the other senses only smell appears at times. In *The White Doe of Rylstone* the smell of the woodbine enables him to recollect the past when

from the pendent woodbine came

Like odours, sweet as if the same.

When we read, "a subtle smell that spring unbinds," we have a vague usage. The general deficiency in the sensation of smell is related to the sensation of sound. And the sensation of touch was not allowed to develop or assert itself. Then it is an austere, bleak world, a world of bare mountains and bare trees. But the typical Wordsworthian image disturbs us and it also reassures us. There is a joy mingled with fear and awe ; and the experience exalts us as it terrifies us.

But what distinguishes Wordsworth is his rich gift for the super-sensuous imagery. He speaks of those modes of being that are not apprehended by any or all of the senses :

Oh ! there is life that breathes not ; Powers there are

That touch each other to the quick in modes

Which the gross world no sense hath to perceive,

No soul to dream of.

He had the *sense* to experience the "serene and blessed mood", and it is a "visionary power". This power demands an awareness of silence, and Wordsworth had a tremendous ear for silence. He speaks of "the silence that is in the starry sky", of the "silent hills and more than silent sky", of "the ghostly language of the ancient earth".

## LINES COMPOSED A FEW MILES ABOVE TINTERN ABBEY

Wordsworth said on this poem: "No poem of mine was composed under circumstances more pleasant for me to remember than this. I began it upon leaving Tintern, after crossing the Wye, and concluded it just as I was entering Bristol in the evening, after a ramble of four or five days with my sister. Not a line of it was altered, and not any part of it written down till I reached Bristol."

The theme of the poem is the influence of Nature on the various stages of a man's life. It is an abridged version of *The Prelude* and it is related to the *Immortality Ode*. The poet visited the Wye in the summer of 1793. Five years later, he again visits the place and presents his experience of the present in relation to the past and the future. Here is a rich pantheism expressed in the finest tradition of eastern mysticism. It is an intensely religious poem where the word God is not mentioned even once.

The poem explains the mere annual experiences of Nature in boyhood, the experiences of the next stage where the beauty and sublimity of Nature came to him through the eye and the ear and became a passion, the tranquillising and elevating and spiritual influences that Nature gave him in the third stage, and finally a feeling for Nature which was touched and chastened by "the still, sad music of humanity". In this final stage he had a deeper communion with the Spiritual Presence in Nature and in Man. These stages, says Dowden, are respectively the periods of the blood, senses, imagination, and soul. At each stage the poet loses something and gains something much more valuable. As Myers put it, "Wordsworth has shown by the subtle intensity of his own emotion how the contemplation of Nature can be made a revealing agency, like Love or Prayer—an opening, if indeed there be any opening, into the transcendent world."



Wordsworth observed : "In poetry it is the imaginative only, viz., that which is conversant with, or twins upon, infinity, that powerfully affects me." We have the source of this feature in *Tintern Abbey*. He carries alive the truth into the human heart as he proceeds to express his mood. It is also "the first poem," says Helen Darbishire, "in which Wordsworth's genius finds full expression : the blank verse, low-toned and familiar, yet impassioned, moves with a sureness and inevitable ease from phase to phase of his mood." The movement is rather quiet and there is the hard core of tranquillity which appears in all his best poems.

Wordsworth visualised a complex literary form for this poem. He said : "I have not ventured to call this Poem an Ode, but it was written with a hope that in the transitions and the impassioned music of versification would be found the principal requisites of that species of composition." Here is a highly accomplished verse. Myers called the poem the "locus classicus or consecrated formulary of the Wordsworthian faith". In the words of Herford, it is "a great poem of a flawless and noble beauty throughout"; it is "one of his most personal pieces wrought from the inmost stuff of his mind and heart". There is an intense awareness of the activity of the senses, and the poet is carried to the heights of emotional sensitiveness.

The nature-mysticism of this poem has a non-human base. He is aware of the loss of the dizzy raptures of his youth. He feels that other gifts have followed. He does not spell them. As it is, the poem, says Bateson, "conceals a confession of failure." Keats found the poem to be full of dark passages, and the poet to be a moral mist : "it seems to me that his genius is explorative of those dark passages." But what Wordsworth does in the poem is to recognise a spiritual quality in man's subjective response to nature. Even the senses can be the anchor of purest thoughts. Matter and mystery are reconciled at the mystic level while preserving the rich tension.

The "beauteous forms" are the external forms or shapes and also the ideal shapes living in the memory. He does not refer to their colours, as he does later. A "form" can be an insubstantial phantom. The scene referred to is both present and past, both substantial and ideal. And when he owes "sensations sweet" to them, he refers to the external forms and also to the impressions produced by them. The sensations are *sweet*. This word in generally



used by Wordsworth in a purely inward or spiritual content, or in relation to memory. He tells his sister,

When thy mind  
Shall be a mansion for all lovely forms,  
Thy memory be as a dwelling-place  
For all sweet sounds and harmonies.

The expression "sensations sweet" expresses the actual coalescence of the subject and the object. They are "felt in the blood, and felt along the heart"; and next they are found "passing even into my purer mind." Then "sweet" refers also to something pure and pleasant, Wordsworth next talks about the "good man's life" and the "acts of kindness".

The interpenetration of the spiritual and the physical levels of being again comes to us in the lines :

Once again  
Do I behold these steep and *lofty* cliffs,  
That on a *wild* secluded scene *impress*  
*Thoughts* of more *deep* seclusion.

The cliffs *impress* thoughts as if they are impressing a design or a superscription without needing a conscious agent. The thoughts are equally deep. In *Tintern Abbey* Wordsworth repeats certain words in different contexts. They reveal a unique pattern in this otherwise rhetorical poem. C. C. Clarke gives a good list of these repetitions. Thus we have the "rolling from their mountain springs", and also the words "And rolls through all things." There is the spirit whose dwelling is the light of setting suns; and about Dorothy, "Thy memory be a dwelling-place." Such expressions reveal his faith that the forms of things are shapes in the mind, and that there is a mind "in all forms of things". It is the presence of the mind not in the object, but in the *form* of the object, that he emphasises. His mind was *impressed* with quietness and beauty, and the objects *impress* thoughts. There is "a soft, inland *murmur*" of the brook, and he will not *murmur*. We have the *motion* of the human blood along with "a *motion* and a spirit". *Quietness* belongs to the sky and to the eye. He speaks of "*deep* seclusion", "*deep* power of joy", "*deep* rivers", deep wood, deep interfusion of the spirit, and deeper zeal. The cliffs and the thoughts are *lofty*. The hermit, the streams, and the rooms are *lonely*. The scene, the sportive wood, the eyes, and the ecstasies are *wild*. Nature, joy, and affections *lead* us. The river and the man *wander*. The scene and the sense are *sublime*. The sense and the heart speak a *language*. The setting sun and the

wild eyes have *light*. Such expressions show that Wordsworth rejected any distinction between a thing and a thought, between the object and the feeling. The living and the lifeless cannot differ. The spiritual and the sensory vision have a similarity. As Wimsatt puts it, here is "a whole pantheistic poem woven of the landscape, where God is not once 'mentioned'". There is "a dramatisation of the spiritual" involving a conflict between the forms which are objects of thought, and the things. To this dramatisation we owe the personification of the "beauteous forms". The process is conducted so admirably as to reveal an independent being in the lines,

Nature never did betray

The heart that loved her.

Nature is both a collection of "beauteous forms" and a spiritual person. Such a transformation is rendered possible and convincing by applying the same word to an external object and to the mind. There is an onward progress as the sensations pass into the purer mind and the affections gently lead us on. As Shelley said, Wordsworth discovered thought in sense.

## IMMORTALITY ODE

Coleridge spoke of "immortal Ode on Immortality". Coleridge left Grasmere on 20th March, 1802. Wordsworth worked on the Cuckoo poem from 22nd to 25th March. On the evening of the 25th he wrote the *Rainbow* poem. He began the *Ode* on the 27th. He added something to the *Ode* on 17th June. On April 4, Coleridge wrote his Verse Letter to Sara Hutchinson. The poem was completed in 1804. In May 1802 he began *Resolution and Independence*. The *Ode* thus came to have two distinct parts composed at widely different periods.

The lines *To the Cuckoo* take us to "a tale of visionary hours", a tale of a child that took the bird to be "an invisible thing, a voice, a mystery." Listening to its song he finds the earth to be

An unsubstantial faery place

That is fit home for thee.

Then he turns to the rainbow which made his child's heart leap up ; and he closed the poem with the lines :

The child is father of the man

And I could wish my days to be

Bound each to each by natural piety.

These lines form the motto of the *Ode*. The "timely utterance" mentioned in the *Ode* is taken by Garrod to refer to the *Rainbow* poem, and by Trilling to refer to *Resolution and Independence* which was composed in June 1802. We may remember Dorothy saying that on 17th June "William added a little to the ode he is writing". The conception of "natural piety" mentioned in the short poem is worked out in the case of the leech-gatherer. Moreover, there is a struggle to overcome the sullenness in *Resolution and Independence*. In the *Ode* he says, "Oh evil day ! if I were sullen." The "timely utterance" of the leech-gatherer gave "relief" to the poet, and made him once again

resolute in his dedication to the career of a poet. The *Ode* is then related to a number of poems. It is autobiographical and at the same time it looks forward to the future.

In 1802 March-April Wordsworth stopped after the fourth stanza. He was faced with a crisis revolving round the questions :

Whither is fled the visionary gleam ?

Where is it now, the glory and the dream ?

These questions point to a crisis in Wordsworth's mental and spiritual life. The senses gave him earlier "the glory and the freshness" of a valid experience. But he now finds that "the things that I have seen I now can see no more." The former visions are now not frequent. They may have even stopped coming to him. "These hath passed a glory from the earth." He devotes four stanzas to an explanation of this loss, and the last three express the value of a life that cannot have this "visionary gleam".

The explanation of the loss comes from Plato's doctrine of recollection derived through Coleridge. In later years both Wordsworth and Coleridge rejected the normal interpretation of the Platonic doctrine because of their strong prejudices in favour of the Christian dogma. What Wordsworth actually did in the fifth stanza was to interpret the intellectualist position of Plato in terms of sensations and feelings. The Wordsworthian doctrine of recollection is not a part of the theory of knowledge as in Plato. But it is an essential part of a theory outliving the ultimate nature of experience. It is not a mere "romance of sensation" if only because the poet claims the verification of the knowledge he offers by referring to our recollections of our own childhood. He is earnest about it in the poem and we cannot dismiss it lightly. If we are not able to recollect, we can at least observe the child. The sense impressions and the behaviour to the child form our clues to an awareness of the pre-natal existence. This awareness grows fainter and fainter as we advance into youth and into manhood. By conscious effort he claims to have substituted other gifts in the place of this gift of vision.

But Wordsworth continuously wrote good poems as long as he was given to dreams. He has frequent references to dreams. The Highland girl and her home

together seem

Like something fashioned in a dream.

There are "twenty souls happy as souls in a dream" listening to the fiddler. There are "waking thoughts more bright than happiest

dreams". We have "the liveliness of dreams", "the varnish and the gloss of dreams", and "the glory and the freshness of a dream". The Wanderer, who is no other than the poet, was brought up "in dreams, in study, and in ardent thought". The river Derwent

sent a voice

That flowed along my dreams.

There is a vivid dream in the fifth book of *The Prelude*. He was also given to reverie.

More than the dream and the reverie, it was the vision that he delighted in. Here he was helped by his sensitivity to impressions of a supernormal character, and by his frequent trances. There were moments when the light of sense

Goes out, but with a flash that has revealed

The invisible world.

The vision as such was induced by an external object. Wordsworth took it to be the "high hour of visitation from the living God", at the time of *The Excursion*. Earlier the vision had no religious or theological overtones. We have visionary touches at the end of *Lucy Gray*, in *Alice Fell*, in *The Sailor's Mother*, and in many others. In the vision he has

A presence that disturbs me with the joy

Of elevated thoughts.

While the leech-gatherer was talking,

the lonely place,

The old Man's shape, and speech—all troubled me.

If the trouble is to give place to ecstasy, the eye has to be

made quiet by the power

Of harmony, and the deep power of joy.

But by the time he came to the twelfth book of *The Prelude*, he realised the slow decay of this power :

I see by glimpses now ; when age comes on,

May scarce see at all.

At least in the *Ode* he is not complaining about his total loss of sight.

Dean Sperry's took the *Ode* to be "Wordsworth's conscious farewell to his art, a dirge sung over his departing powers". This is a gross misunderstanding of the poem. Both Wordsworth and Coleridge felt that the poem needs a competent and attentive reader only. The difficulty lies in the expression and in the ideas. The poem is Wordsworth's rededication to poetry, to a new kind of poetry.

The poem deals with the growth of a child into manhood. It offers a poetic account of a theory of knowledge and of a way of seeing. As it advances, it presents a way of living with power and freedom. What is seen raises some questions; and this is given in the first four stanzas. Then the poet proceeds to answer these questions, and in so doing he moves from despair to hope.

The poem opens by telling us of a time when everything was "apparelled in celestial light". That was the time when all the objects had "the glory and freshness of a dream". The light is a kind of dress (apparelled), and the earth was clothed by it. We get the celestial lights—sun, moon, and stars—in the next stanza. These lights confer the glory on the earth; or there is a spiritual light which clothes everything on the earth including the child; or the child clothes everything with its own spiritual light.

What he has lost now is not the awareness of the beauty of the natural world. We have the rainbow, the moon, the stars, the sun, and the rose in the second stanza. Here he continues with the same mood, but by affirming his present powers of seeing. The complication begins in the third stanza. He is aware of the loss of glory and there comes "a thought of grief". The grief came to him when he became conscious of the change in his powers of seeing. It did not follow the change, but the awareness of the change. And yet it did not stay long because "a timely utterance gave that thought relief". When the moon looks round with delight in the second stanza, she is participating in the joy of the child given in the first. The moon sheds the gleam and lights the world just as the child looks round with joy and creates and receives the vision. There is also the loveliness of the moon, and there is the glory of the dawn when we read that "the sunshine is a glorious birth."

The fourth takes us to a tone of ecstasy. He sees, hears, and feels, and shares the joy. The preceding stanza has shifted the emphasis from seeing to hearing. He hears everything, and hearing is capable of recalling him to the vanished glories of his own past experiences. It ends with the words "gleam" and "dream". The word "gleam" is usually associated in Wordsworth's poetry with the moments of insight which are rendered by the poet with reference to light. The moment of enlightenment brings forth "floods of light and glory", and this light is the Wordsworthian theme in the great decade. The "poet's dream" is synonymous with "gleam" in the Peele Castle verses, and this dream refers to "the light that never was on sea or land"; it is a "consecration".

Wordsworth has now lost "the youthful Poet's Dream". "A power is gone, which nothing can restore." He has, however, gained something in that "a deep distress hath humanised my soul." He has submitted himself to "a new control". The dream has a vividness associated with an emotional experience. The familiar object assumes a strange aspect or significance in the dream. The glory is unanalysable and elusive like a dream. When Wordsworth rhymes "dream" with "seem", and when he immediately says,

It is not now as it hath been of yore,  
he is contrasting "dream" with seeming, with appearance. The dream then refers not to the transiency of experience, but to a reality conveyed in the opening stanza. It is a "visionary gleam" because we are not privileged to remain in the world of dreams now; and if the vision of the past glory comes to us now, it is "fugitive". We have only "shadowy recollections" of the past experience. The transience refers to the present vision, not to the past experience which gave an insight, a revelation. And when the poet uses the term "visionary", he is referring to something other than the actual, not to something other than the real. The vision fades into the light of common day which is the light of the prosaic or materialistic life. From the empirical point of view it is visionary or impractical: but from the transcendental standpoint it is intense and real. It is a "gleam" because his heart is at the festival of the children, not at his own. He sees after hearing:

I see, I see, with joy I see!

But if he comes out of the context of the child, he cannot see with this joy; and so the sight of the *single* tree depresses him. Even the earth seeks to adorn herself, anticipating her note in the sixth stanza. But the earth as a part of nature and as an appearance does lead us to a moment of great insight. The influence of this insight as the moulding of the human spirit is to come back to us towards the end of the poem.

The fourth stanza associates dream with sense-perception and with the visionary insight:

The cataracts blow their trumpets from the steep;  
No more shall grief of mine the season wrong;  
I hear Echoes through the mountains throng,  
The winds come to me from the fields of sleep,  
And all the earth is gay.

The winds were probably sleeping in the fields earlier, and now they have awakened to a fresh and vigorous life. The fields of sleep may



refer to the realms where sleep with her child the dream lives. The winds come from the fresh field, and the winds of inspiration come from the dream-land. The dream has a "glory" and a "freshness". It is a vision and also a unique sensation. The splendour may depart from the object; but it remains in the vision. Then the visionary experience refuses to accept mortality as a fact. As he told Mrs. Clarkson in Dec. 1814, "The poem rests entirely upon two recollections of childhood, one that of a splendour in the objects of sense which is passed away, and the other an indisposition to bend to the law of death as applying to our particular case." The splendour lives in the vision; and the vision presupposes the immortality of the observer of that vision.

The third and the fourth stanzas express the poet's capacity for joy. The last two stanzas again take us to this joy and explain why he was able to preserve this capacity. The first four stanzas form the exposition of a crisis in his life. There is the apparent passing away of a glory. The next four stanzas offer an explanation of the nature of this glory. The last three stanzas constitute a promise which resolves the crisis. There is the promise of a meaning and a value in a life that appears to have lost the visionary experiences. This unusual theme is given an unusual form. Though he has lost something, he is not prepared to admit that he lost everything of value. It was a serious crisis which shook the very foundations and depths of his being. The seriousness of the situation is conveyed through his anguish in the opening stanzas. There is a troubled mood leading to an introspection. The period of the visionary experiences is placed in contrast with the awareness of his "moral being". In *Tintern Abbey* he spoke of "other gifts"; and what these may be, we get in the *Ode*.

The answers given to the questions raised by the first part of the poem move in two directions. The first is a Platonic, spiritual explanation; and the second is naturalistic. The former show how the gleam disappears, and the latter how it is transformed. The first answer is in stanzas 5 to 8. Here the gleam is said to have an ante-natal existence. Rejecting Locke's conception of the mind being a *tabula rasa*, he turns to the Platonic idea of the pre-existence of the human soul. This ante-natal existence is capable of being recollected. The memory of that state is relatively strong in infancy, and it gradually becomes fainter and fainter as the "shades of the prison-house begin to close upon the growing boy". The *natural splendour* gets replaced by *Custom*:



Full soon thy soul shall have her earthly freight,  
And custom lie upon thee with a weight,  
Heavy as frost, and deep almost as life !

Custom is the antithesis of nature ; and accordingly the second answer takes us to a return to a new attitude towards nature.

The fifth stanza looks backwards to the second where we find that "the sunshine is a glorious *birth*." Like the sun, moon, and stars that bring their own radiance, the child too enters the world "trailing clouds of glory". The child comes from God and moves away towards darkness which in our world of appearances is the sphere of persons and things revealed by sunlight. The world of prosaic sunlight is the world of darkness described as the "shades of the prison house". And when he refers to light in the lines,

At length the Man perceives it die away,  
And fade into the light of common day,

he is talking of the empirical light, not of the light of the spirit. This is the "light" in the realm of appearances, while the "light" of the opening stanzas refers to the world of Reality.

The soul is life's star and it does not rise in utter forgetfulness, nor in entire nakedness. This star is not the sun. But it has the steely glitter. But as the child becomes the youth, the star is mistaken to be the sun ; and then it loses its glory and enters the prosaic daylight. The ambivalent symbolism of light is significant because the two meanings refer to the two worlds of reality and appearance ; and this symbolism pervades the entire poem. Towards the close we have a sober tint coming from "the setting sun".

The child can only wake up into the world of the spirit. But when it enters our world, there is "a sleep and a forgetting". It is a spiritual sleep and a forgetting of a spiritual experience. There the soul is greatly helped by the earth who "fills her lap with pleasures of *her own*". There are yearnings "in her own natural kind". They are proper to the earth and they also belong to nature. The earth is a foster-mother, a "homely nurse" ; and "homely" means plain and unattractive. She is a little dull and stupid, though she is kind and sympathetic. Naturally the child apparelled her in celestial light. This sixth stanza makes the human soul an outsider, an imperial entity coming from the "imperial palace". Yet the earth does succeed in making the child "her inmate Man". We become the inmates of the prison, of the Platonic cave.

The seventh and the eighth stanzas are the weakest. Not only there is Coleridge's criticism against them, but there is the tone of a

commentator in these stanzas. He looks at the child in a patronising way and then exalts him. There is a reference to Coleridge's son Hartley. But underneath is a new awareness. Like the child, the poet too has his visions; and the lines addressed *To the Cuckoo* prove it. But these visions are not now so frequent as in the past. Moreover, the poet is worried about his relation with nature. In the absence of the frequency of the visions, the poet cannot be consoled by the child because he must derive only a moral inspiration from nature. But Wordsworth knew that the visionary experience gives us a real spiritual world in which the child participates. Such an experience is closely related to the imaginative activity, to the creative process. It also opens the way towards a realisation of immortality. Accordingly he finds the child overcoming his temporal being and resting secure at the heart of reality. One cannot then accept Southey's remark that it is "the Ode on Pre-existence—a dark subject darkly handled". Wordsworth called it the "poem on the Immortality of the Soul".

In the eighth stanza the child is the "eye among the blind". It is "deaf and silent", and "reads the eternal deep". The child sees and experiences without knowing what it is provoking. It tries to turn blind like others. It does not tell what it reads; and in trying to become blind like others, it reveals that experience is higher than knowledge. Experience proceeds and succeeds knowledge. It is therefore a philosopher who values experience over and above knowledge and this experience brings forth an expanding consciousness of itself. But in actual life knowledge seeks to invade the domain of experience. The child has significant experiences; and he not only realises a harmony with the universe, but shares the joy of all the beings.

The child feels the truths because he comes from God and because he is nearer the source. He feels them because he realises his harmonious unity with the universe, which unity is a principle operating in the system of reality. This makes the child completely natural. To be natural is to be invested with a divine madness, whence Wordsworth's fondness for the idiots and for the crazed. And the poet saw divinity in those "beauteous forms" of Nature which reveal this harmony.

The second answer begins with the ninth stanza, the recovery stanza. It explains that there is the memory of the visionary gleam. Such a memory is possible because of the continuity of the same self from childhood to manhood. The "celestial light" of

infancy now becomes "the fountain-light of all our day", the "master-light of all our seeing". He offers "the song of thanks and praise" not for the glory, delight, liberty, or hope coming from childhood. Rather, he would praise for

those obstinate questionings

Of sense and outward things,

Fallings from us, vanishings ;

Blank misgivings of a Creature

Moving about in worlds not realised.

The awareness of the glory or the light of the child's experiences raises the "obstinate questionings" about the absolute reality of the external physical universe. The "blank misgivings" belong to a world which was not yet made real. The child is aware of its own absolute reality, and therefore of its immortality, and Wordsworth expresses a real conviction in the pre-existence of the soul. In later life "I and my brother the Dean" voice repudiated this faith. But to bring that later voice into the interpretation of the poem of an earlier period, as Trilling does, is to misread the poem. Trilling's misreading is a part of Wordsworth's misreading caused by prejudices in favour of Christianity, not in favour of reading the poem as a structural whole. The lines under discussion actually express the Berkeleyan Idealism which rejects the reality of matter. The external world is a part of the internal world only when it is transmuted into the nature of the spirit. Then the world is a spiritual or "active universe". As he put it in the second book of *The Prelude*,

Emphatically such a Being lives,

Frail creature as he is, helpless as frail,

An inmate of this active universe :

For feeling has to him imparted power

That through the growing faculties of sense,

Doth like an agent of the one great Mind

Create, creator and receiver both,

Working but in alliance with the works

Which it beholds.

The child creates and receives : *er se is percipi* and it is also what is understood. The feeling or the primary affection imparts a power to the senses. This primal sympathy is what constitutes the "more than usual organic sensibility." Then whatever may be the kind of paradox, ambiguity, irony and metaphor employed in the poem, the *Ode* is not a failure, as Brooks argues. It succeeds in establish-

ing a bridge between the visionary past and new promise of the future.

In the ninth stanza he offers his ranks to his childhood experiences which he is able to recollect :

But for those first affections,  
Those shadowy recollections,  
Which, be they what they may,  
Are yet the fountain light of all our day,  
Are yet a master light of all our seeing.

Even if the recollections are "shadowy", we have a "fountain light", a "master-light" arising therefrom. They are dim, and yet they are capable of illumining our lives. Here empirical and transcendental forms of light and darkness are so freely used as to confuse even a sensitive reader into discovering a paradox or an ambiguity. From the context and the general trend one can easily make out whether the poet is referring to the empirical or to the spiritual.

The child as the best philosopher "reads the eternal deep", and in the ninth stanza we

See the children sport upon the shore.

It is a sport from the standpoint of the adult's framework of values. They sport on the shore of the sea of Immortality, and they are not afraid of "the mighty waters rolling". They are the blessed

On whom these truths do rest,  
Which we are toiling all our lives to find.

They *feel* the truths, and the adults seek to *know* those truths.

The adult does not have the power adequate to respond to the influences of Nature :

O Joy ! that in our embers  
Is something that doth live.

There is just a little glow in the grown man, while the child has a blazing fire. Youth too has a vision. But the prison-house takes man as an inmate.

At length the Man perceives it die away,  
And fade into the light of common day.

If the glory fades, man carries only a burden in his heart. Then how can joy emerge in the concluding stanzas ? This difficulty led Beatty to argue that stanzas 1 to 4 and 9 to 11 form one complete poem based on the three ages, and that stanzas 5 to 9 constitute "a complete poem on the glory of the child and his derivation from afar, more idealistic and less optimistic than earlier state-

ments." The ninth stanza is then common to both, and this is least satisfactory.

Wordsworth speaks of the "truths that wake to perish never". They continue into manhood. Here we find him stating :

What though the radiance which was once so bright  
Be now for ever taken from my sight,  
Though nothing can bring back the hour  
Of splendour in the grass, of glory in the flower,  
We will grieve not, rather find  
Strength in what remains behind ;  
In the primal sympathy  
Which having been must ever be ;  
In the soothing thoughts that spring  
Out of human suffering ;  
In the faith that looks through death,  
In years that bring the philosophic mind.

He discovers strength in what continues to be present in him. He does not mean what he acquired since childhood. There is something continuing to remain the same as it was in his childhood ; and this continuity is indicated by the closing lines of the *Rainbow* poem. What remains is the "primal sympathy". To the presence and recollection of this he now adds "the soothing thoughts". This he has acquired after childhood and here we have the source of moral strength. Since the primal sympathy is now divested of a closeness to the celestial light, it acquires a strength from the ethical life. Hence "we will grieve not." Then with manhood there also arise "faith" and a "philosophic mind". Human suffering humanises him and gives him soothing thoughts ; and the philosophic mind will seek to direct and control the experience hereafter. The philosophic mind of the eighth stanza directs and controls our knowledge. The newly acquired philosophic mind looks forward to a consciously realised immortality. Then the incoherence in the structure of the poem is not really there. We have the *embers* and the "primal sympathy", whence we have a loss and also a compensation for that partial loss.

There is a trust in Nature. He believes that Nature will sustain him. He has now "relinquished one delight" alone, the former visionary power. He would henceforward "live beneath" nature's "more habitual sway". He would accept the companionship with Nature because she is capable of inspiring the affections and mould-

ing his "moral being". The effect of Nature on the primary affections is more enduring than the effect of the vision.

Towards the end of the poem Wordsworth offers his thanks to  
the human heart by which we live,

Thanks to its tenderness, its joys, and fears.

Even the clouds do not give to the eye their sober colouring, rather they take it from the eye. The flower gives to the heart both thought and emotion.

The poem is drenched in the imagery of light. There is also the image of the flower running throughout the poem. And as Coleridge remarked, with Wordsworth words mean all of their possible meaning. This is eminently true of this Ode.

# 13

## THE PRELUDE

*The Prelude* of 1850 carried an advertisement stating that it was begun in 1799 and "completed in the summer of 1805." The third line of the seventh book carries a note stating that the opening lines forming the preamble (1.1-45) were written on the day the poet left Goslar. It was 23rd February, 1799. But 1.65 refers to a day of autumn when he "escaped from the vast city." Hutchinson argued that the preamble was composed in the autumn of 1795, when he had Calvert's legacy which turned him from London to Bristol and from there to Racedown House. Wordsworth was aware of the fact that the preamble was unlike his other poems in that it expresses the contemporary emotions :

Thus far did I, my friend, unused to make  
A present joy the matter of a song,  
Pour forth my soul that day. (1.46-48)

On this basis Harper argued that the preamble was felt and composed in the autumn of 1795. From Bristol, where the poet was on the 2nd September of 1795, he had :

A pleasant loitering journey, through three days.  
Before he came to Bristol, he was for a considerable time in London,  
the vast city where I long had pined  
A discontented sojourner. (1.7-8)

The legacy made him

now free,  
Free as a bird to settle where I will. (1.8-9)

The river of line 30 is Avon, and the smoke of 88-89 came from Bristol. By line 107 he reaches the "hermitage", the Racedown Cottage. The next 162 lines tell us of his subsequent stay there. In these lines we have an account of the trend of his ideas about his career as a poet. He thought of a romantic epic (166-220) and of the familiar themes (221-227). The latter was realised in the



*Lyrical Ballads* and the former lingered till 1815 when he took up *Artegal and Elidure*. He was during that period thinking of  
some philosophic song

Of truth that cherishes our daily life ;  
With meditations passionate from the deep  
Recesses in man's heart, immortal verse  
Thoughtfully fitted to the Orphean lyre.

This leads him to examine his own fitness as a poet for such a task. This self-examination was completed in May, 1805. On 3rd June, 1805 he told Beaumont that he finished the poem "about a fortnight ago".

The original version of 1805 was revised, re-written, and published in 1850. The passionate and pantheistic poet of 1805 is replaced by a Christian and moralist. The faith in the greatness of the human mind gives way to a humility. The elemental experience of an earlier day is softened. But something of the essential spirit of the great decade manages to survive in the revised text. This something is the vital activity of imagination ; and the poet once said, "the voice which is the voice of my poetry, without imagination cannot be heard."

*The Prelude* was intended to be an introduction to a much longer work called *The Recluse*. The second part of *The Recluse* is *The Excursion* ; and the first and the third parts were not written. *The Prelude* originally was in thirteen books, and the final text has fourteen. It is the spiritual autobiography of the poet. It was conceived to be a kind of an ante-chapel wherein he traces his development in and through the influences of education, nature and society. This record was intended to convince the poet of his ability to function as a poet-teacher.

Wordsworth observes : "I wrote while yet a school-boy, a long poem running upon my own adventures and the scenery of the country in which I was brought." The passion for autobiography possessed him early ; and when it found expression in *The Prelude* it is free from vanity and pride. The poem is a kind of self-examination and also a self-expression while it offers the picture of a new age.

May my life

Express the image of a better time,  
More wise desires and simpler manners.

There is a Miltonic self-assurance in such lines as these. Taking himself to be "a renovated spirit singled out . . . for holy services," he puts

on a "priestly robe" because "vows were made for him." Ho took to the composition of new poetry as "a dedicated spirit" and "in thankful blessedness". In this attitude he could offer a truthful account of his past because he looked upon his earlier life as though it did not belong to him :

So wide appears  
The vacancy between me and those days  
Which yet have such self-presence in my mind,  
That, musing on them, often do I seem  
Two consciousnesses, conscious of myself  
And of some other being.

In this objective study he was attempting to trace the growth of the poet's being.

*The Prelude* was actively taken up in 1799 and it was complete by 1806. This was the period of Coleridge's profound influence on him. The whole work was addressed to Coleridge. As Garrod remarks well, that entire poem was "written to him and for him—and in a sense *by* him." The presiding genius of the poem was Coleridge.

Large themes came to him, and he was conscious of "impediments from day to day renewed". He had to "recoil and droop and seek repose in listlessness" and felt that he was "unprofitably travelling towards the grave". Remembering his early days amid lakes and mountains, he wonders about his present and future. The materials out of which poetry and autobiography emerge are the most prosaic like bird-snaring, skating, fishing, kite-sailing, and cards. Yet here we have a new poetry and the experiences of childhood provide "something of the base on which thy greatness stands".

The days gone by  
Return upon me almost from the dawn  
Of life : the hiding-places of man's power  
Open.

He tells us that even from his childhood the "wisdom and spirit of the universe" bound his soul to "high objects" and he felt "a grandeur in the beatings of the heart". Nature was only "intervenient" till he was ten ; and till seventeen he was consciously seeking her. Now he "walks with Nature" in "the spirit of religious love". As he begins to commune with her, he finds a sharpening of his "first creative sensibility" and also the disappearance of the externality of the world :

bodily eyes

Were utterly forgotten, and what I saw  
 Appeared like something in myself, a dream,  
 A prospect in the wind.

This was rendered explicit in the *Immortality Ode*; and this led him to realise that he was "a dedicated spirit". During all this period, covered by the second book, his "soul was unsubdued" "by the regular action of the world"; and man appeared to be pure and sublime.

The next four books deal with his undergraduate days at Cambridge. At the end comes a Miltonic resolve for a serious literary vocation. He was eager, he says,

that I might leave  
 Some monument behind me which pure hearts  
 Should reverence.

Throughout he seeks to show "the power of images in the poet's mental life, and the deeper phase of experience known to the mystic, in which with a deep drop into himself he seems to join the inner life of the whole universe.

The structure of *The Prelude* is like that of a pyramid. It has a broad base provided by sense impressions. The capstone comes from the mystic vision of the unity of creation. The poem closes with the ascent of Mount Snowdon. The natural scene is a symbolic part of a spiritual intuition. The recollected natural scene is invested with the meaning it has for him at this moment. The mind of the poet is throughout sustained

By recognitions of transcendent power,  
 In sense conducting to ideal form.

Such a mind can "hold fit converse with the spiritual world"; and Coleridge, after listening to this great poem, found himself "in prayer".

The poem ends with a praise of freedom he had because of a legacy from Raisley Calvert. The bequest is recorded in the last book. This is followed by a request to Coleridge to recall

The mood in which this labour was begun.

In the summer of 1798 it was felt by Coleridge

that the history of a poet's mind  
 Is labour not unworthy of regard.

To thee the work shall justify itself.



# POEMS



## POEMS

### 1. TINTERN ABBEY

[ *Composed a few miles above Tintern Abbey, on  
revisiting the Banks of the Wye during a Tour.*]

JULY 13, 1798.

FIVE years have past ; five summers, with the length  
Of five long winters ! and again I hear  
These waters, rolling from their mountain-springs  
With a sweet inland murmur.<sup>1</sup>—Once again  
Do I behold these steep and lofty cliffs, 5  
That on a wild secluded scene impress  
Thoughts of more deep seclusion ; and connect  
The landscape with the quiet of the sky.  
The day is come when I again repose  
Here, under this dark sycamore, and view 10  
These plots of cottage-ground, these orchard-tufts,  
Which at this season, with their unripe fruits,  
Are clad in one green hue, and lose themselves  
Among the woods and copses, nor disturb  
The wild green landscape. Once again I see 15  
These hedgerows, hardly hedgerows, little lines  
Of sportive wood run wild : these pastoral farms,  
Green to the very door ; and wreaths of smoke  
Sent up, in silence, from among the trees !  
With some uncertain notice, as might seem 20  
Of vagrant dwellers in the houseless woods,  
Or of some Hermit's cave, where by his fire  
The Hermit sits alone.

These beauteous Forms,  
Through a long absence, have not been to me 25  
As is a landscape to a blind man's eye :  
But oft, in lonely rooms, and 'mid the din  
Of towns and cities, I have owed to them,

<sup>1</sup> The river is not affected by the tides a few miles above Tintern.



In hours of weariness, sensations sweet,  
 Felt in the blood, and felt along the heart ; 30  
 And passing even into my purer mind,  
 With tranquil restoration : ✓feelings too  
 Of unremembered pleasure : such, perhaps,  
 As have no slight or trivial influence  
 On that best portion of a good man's life, 35  
 His little, nameless, unremembered acts  
 Of kindness and of love. ✓Nor less, I trust,  
 To them I may have owed another gift,  
 Of aspect more sublime ; that blessed mood,  
 In which the burthen of the mystery, 40  
 In which the heavy and the weary weight  
 Of all this unintelligible world,  
 Is lightened, ✓that serene and blessed mood,  
 In which the affections gently lead us on,—  
 Until, the breath of this corporeal frame 45  
 And even the motion of our human blood  
 Almost suspended, we are laid asleep  
 In body, and become a living soul :  
 While with an eye made quiet by the power  
 Of harmony, and the deep power of joy, 50  
 We see into the life of things.

✓  
If this

Be but a vain belief, yet, oh ! how oft,  
 In darkness, and amid the many shapes  
 Of joyless daylight ; when the fretful stir 55  
 Unprofitable, and the fever of the world,  
 Have hung upon the beatings of my heart,  
 How oft, in spirit, have I turned to thee, ✓  
 O sylvan Wye ! Thou wanderer thro' the woods.  
 How often has my spirit turned to thee ! 60

And now, with gleams of half-extinguished thought,  
 With many recognitions dim and faint,  
 And somewhat of a sad perplexity,  
 The picture of the mind revives again :  
 While here I stand, not only with the sense 65  
 Of present pleasure, but with pleasing thoughts  
 That in this moment there is life and food  
 For future years. And so I dare to hope,  
 Though changed, no doubt, from what I was when first

I came among these hills : when like a roe 70  
 I bounded o'er the mountains, by the sides  
 Of the deep rivers, and the lonely streams,  
 Wherever nature led : more like a man  
 Flying from something that he dreads, than one  
 Who sought the thing he loved. For nature then 75  
 (The coarser pleasures of my boyish days,  
 And their glad animal movements all gone by)  
 To me was all in all.—I cannot paint  
 What then I was. The sounding cataract  
 Haunted me like a passion : the tall rock, 80  
 The mountain, and the deep and gloomy wood,  
 Their colours and their forms, were then to me  
 An appetite ; a feeling and a love,  
 That had no need of a remoter charm, ✓  
 By thought supplied, or any interest 85  
 Unborrowed from the eye.—That time is past,  
 And all its aching joys are now no more,  
 And all its dizzy raptures. Not for this  
 Faint I, nor mourn nor murmur ; other gifts  
 Have followed, for such loss, I would believe, 90  
 Abundant recompence. For I have learned  
 To look on nature, not as in the hour  
 Of thoughtless youth ; but hearing oftentimes  
 The still, sad music of humanity,  
 Nor harsh nor grating, though of ample power  
 To chasten and subdue. ✓ And I have felt  
 A presence that disturbs me with the joy  
 Of elevated thoughts : a sense sublime  
 Of something far more deeply interfused,  
 ✓ Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns, 100  
 And the round ocean and the living air,  
 And the blue sky, and in the mind of man  
 A motion and a spirit, that impels  
 All thinking things, all objects of all thought,  
 And rolls through all things. Therefore am I still 105  
 A lover of the meadows and the woods,  
 And mountains ; and of all that we behold  
 From this green earth ; of all the mighty world

Of eye and ear, both what they half create,<sup>1</sup>  
 And what perceive ; well pleased to recognise 110  
 In nature and language of the sense,  
 The anchor of my purest thoughts, the nurse,  
 The guide, the guardian of my heart, and soul  
 Of all my moral being.

Nor perchance, 115  
 ✓ If I were not thus taught, should I the more  
 Suffer my genial spirits to decay :  
 For thou art with me, here, upon the banks  
 Of this fair river ; thou, my dearest Friend,  
 My dear, dear Friend, and in thy voice I catch 120  
 The language of my former heart, and read  
 My former pleasures in the shooting lights  
 Of thy wild eyes. ✓ Oh ! yet a little while  
 May I behold in thee what I was once,  
 My dear, dear Sister ! and this prayer I make, 125  
 Knowing that Nature never did betray  
 The heart that loved her ; 'tis her privilege,  
 Through all the years of this our life, to lead  
 From joy to joy ✓ for she can so inform  
 The mind that is within us, so impress 130  
 With quietness and beauty, and so feed  
 With lofty thoughts, that neither evil tongues,  
 Rash judgments, nor the sneers of selfish men,  
 Nor greetings where no kindness is, nor all  
 The dreary intercourse of daily life, 135  
 Shall e'er prevail against us, disturb  
 Our cheerful faith, that all which we behold  
 Is full of blessings. Therefore let the moon  
 Shine on thee in thy solitary walk ;  
 And let the misty mountain winds be free 140  
 To blow against thee : and in after years,  
 When these wild ecstasies shall be matured  
 Into a sober pleasure, when thy mind  
 Shall be a mansion for all lovely forms,  
 Thy memory be as a dwelling-place 145  
 For all sweet sounds and harmonies ; oh ! then,

<sup>1</sup> This line has a resemblance to an admirable line of Young, the exact expression of which I do not recollect.

If solitude, or fear, or pain, or grief,  
 Should be thy portion, with what healing thoughts  
 Of tender joy wilt thou remember me,  
 And these my exhortations ! Nor, perchance 150  
 If I should be where I no more can hear  
 Thy voice, nor catch from thy wild eyes these gleams  
 Of past existence, wilt thou then forget  
 That on the banks of this delightful stream  
 We stood together ; and that I, so long 155  
 A worshipper of Nature, hither came  
 Unwearied in that service ; rather say  
 With warmer love, oh ! with far deeper zeal  
 Of holier love. Nor wilt thou then forget,  
 That after many wanderings, many years 160  
 Of absence, these steep woods and lofty cliffs,  
 And this green pastoral landscape, were to me  
 More dear, both for themselves and for thy sake

## 2. EXPOSTULATION AND REPLY

"Why, William, on that old grey stone,  
 Thus for the length of half a day,  
 Why, William, sit you thus alone,  
 And dream your time away ?  
 "Where are your books ?—that light bequeathed 5  
 To beings else forlorn and blind !  
 Up ! up ! and drink the spirit breathed  
 From dead men to their kind.  
 "You look round on your mother Earth,  
 As if she for no purpose bore you ; 10  
 As if you were her first-born birth,  
 And none had lived before you !"  
 One morning thus, by Esthwaite lake,  
 When life was sweet, I knew not why,  
 To me my good friend Mathew spake, 15  
 And thus I made reply :  
 "The eye—it cannot choose but see ;  
 We cannot bid the ear be still ;  
 Our bodies feel, wher'er they be,  
 Against, or with our will, 20

"Nor less I deem that there are Powers  
Which of themselves our minds impress ;  
That we can feed this mind of ours  
In a wise passiveness.

"Think you, 'mid all this mighty sum 25  
Of things for ever speaking,  
That nothing of itself will come,  
But we must still be seeking ?

"—Then ask not wherefore, here, alone,  
Conversing as I may, 30  
I sit upon this old grey stone,  
And dream my time away."

### 3. THE TABLES TURNED

*[An Evening Scene on the Same Subject]*

Up ! up ! my Friend, and quit your books ;  
Or surely you'll grow double :  
Up ! up ! my Friend, and clear your looks ;  
Why all this toil and trouble ?

The sun, above the mountain's head, 5  
A freshening lustre mellow  
Through all the long green fields has spread,  
His first sweet evening yellow.

Books ! 'tis a dull and endless strife :  
Come, hear the woodland Linnet, 10  
How sweet his music ! on my life,  
There's more of wisdom in it.

And hark ! how blithe the Thristle sings !  
He, too, is no mean preacher :  
Come forth into the light of things, 15  
Let Nature be your teacher.

She has a world of ready wealth,  
Our minds and hearts to bless—  
Spontaneous wisdom breathed by health,  
Truth breathed by cheerfulness. 20

One impulse from a vernal wood  
May teach you more of man,

Of moral evil and of good,  
Than all the sages can.

Sweet is the lore which Nature brings ;  
Our meddling intellect  
Mis-shapes the beauteous forms of things :  
—We murder to dissect.

Enough of Science and of Art ;  
Close up these barren leaves ;  
Come forth, and bring with you a heart  
That watches and receives.

25

30

#### 4. "THERE WAS A BOY"

THERE was a Boy ; ye knew him well, ye Cliffs  
And islands of Winander !—many a time,  
At evening, when the earliest stars began  
To move along the edges of the hills,  
Rising or setting, would he stand alone,  
Beneath the trees, or by the glimmering lake,  
And there, with fingers interwoven, both hands  
Pressed closely palm to palm and to his mouth  
Uplifted, he, as through an instrument,  
Blew mimic hootings to the silent owls,  
That they might answer him.—And they would shout  
Across the watery vale, and shout again,  
Responsive to his call,—with quivering peals,  
And long halloos, and screams, and echoes loud  
Redoubled and redoubled ; concourse wild  
Of mirth and jocund din ! And, when it chanced  
That pauses of deep silence mocked his skill,  
Then, sometimes, in that silence, while he hung  
Listening, a gentle shock of mild surprise  
Has carried far into his heart the voice  
Of mountain torrents ; or the visible scene  
Would enter unawares into his mind  
With all its solemn imagery, its rocks,  
Its woods, and that uncertain heaven, received  
Into the bosom of the steady lake.

5

10

15

20

25

This Boy was taken from his Mates, and died  
 In childhood, ere he was full twelve years old.  
 Fair is the spot, most beautiful the Vale  
 Where he was born : the grassy Churchyard hangs  
 Upon a slope above the village-school ; 30  
 And, through that Churchyard when my way has led  
 At evening, I believe that oftentimes  
 A long half-hour together I have stood  
 Mute—looking at the grave in which he lies !

### 5. "STRANGE FITS OF PASSION HAVE I KNOWN"

STRANGE fits of passion have I known :  
 And I will dare to tell,  
 But in the Lover's ear alone,  
 What once to me befell.

When she I loved was strong and gay, 5  
 And like a rose in June,  
 I to her cottage bent my way,  
 Beneath the evening Moon.

Upon the Moon I fixed my eye,  
 Al over the wide lea ; 10  
 My Horse trudged on—and we drew nigh  
 Those paths so dear to me.

And now we reached the orchard plot ;  
 And, as we climbed the hill,  
 Towards the roof of Lucy's cot 15  
 The Moon descended still.

In one of those sweet dreams I slept,  
 Kind Nature's gentlest boon !  
 And all the while my eyes I kept  
 On the descending Moon. 20

My Horse moved on ; hoof after hoof  
 He raised, and never stopped :  
 When down behind the cottage roof,  
 At once, the bright Moon dropped.

What fond and wayward thoughts will slide 25  
 Into a Lover's head !—



"O mercy !" to myself I cried,  
"If Lucy should be dead !"

## 6. "THREE YEARS SHE GREW"

THREE years she grew in sun and shower,  
Then Nature said, "A lovelier flower  
On earth was never sown ;  
This Child I to myself will take ;  
She shall be mine, and I will make  
A Lady of my own.

5

"Myself will to my darling be  
Both law and impulse : and with me  
The Girl, in rock and plain,  
In earth and heaven, in glade and bower,  
Shall feel an overseeing power  
To kindle or restrain.

10

"She shall be sportive as the Fawn  
That wild with glee across the lawn  
Or up the mountain springs ;  
And hers shall be the breathing balm,  
And hers the silence and the calm  
Of mute insensate things.

15

"The floating Clouds their state shall lend  
To her ; for her the willow bend ;  
Nor shall she fail to see  
Even in the motions of the Storm  
Grace that shall mould the Maiden's form  
By silent sympathy.

20

"The Stars of midnight shall be dear  
To her ; and she shall lean her ear  
In many a secret place  
Where Rivulets dance their wayward round,  
And beauty born of murmuring sound  
Shall pass into her face.

25

30

"And vital feelings of delight  
Shall rear her form to stately height,  
Her virgin bosom swell ;  
Such thoughts to Lucy I will give

While she and I together live 35  
Here in this happy Dell."

Thus Nature spake—The work was done—  
How soon my Lucy's race was run !  
She died, and left to me  
This heath, this calm and quiet scene ; 40  
The memory of what has been,  
And never more will be.

# 7. "SHE DWELT AMONG THE UNTRODDEN WAYS"

SHE dwelt among the untrodden ways  
Beside the springs of Dove,  
A Maid whom there were none to praise  
And very few to love :  
A Violet by a mossy stone 5  
Half hidden from the eye !  
—Fair as a star, when only one  
Is shining in the sky.  
She lived unknown, and few could know  
When Lucy ceased to be ; 10  
But she is in her grave, and, oh,  
The difference to me !

# 8. "A SLUMBER DID MY SPIRIT SEAL"

A SLUMBER did my spirit seal ;  
I had no human fears :  
She seemed a thing that could not feel  
The touch of earthly years.  
No motion has she now, no force ; 5  
She neither hears nor sees,  
Rolled round in earth's diurnal course,  
With rocks, and stones, and trees.

## 9. LUCY GRAY

*Or, Solitude*

OF I had heard of Lucy Gray :  
And, when I crossed the wild,  
I chanced to see at break of day  
The solitary Child.  
No mate, no comrade Lucy knew ; 5  
She dwelt on a wide moor,  
—The sweetest thing that ever grew  
Beside a human door !  
You yet may spy the fawn at play,  
The hare upon the green ; 10  
But the sweet face of Lucy Gray  
Will never more be seen.  
“To-night will be a stormy night—  
You to the town must go ;  
And take a lantern, Child, to light  
Your mother through the snow.” 15  
“That, Father ! will I gladly do :  
'Tis scarcely afternoon—  
The Minister-clock has just struck two,  
And yonder is the Moon.” 20  
At this the Father raised his hook,  
And snapped a faggot-ban ;  
He plied his work ;—and Lucy took  
The lantern in her hand.  
Not blither is the mountain roe : 25  
With many a wanton stroke  
Her feet disperse the powdery snow,  
That rises up like smoke.  
The snow came on before its time :  
She wandered up and down ; 30  
And many a hill did Lucy climb ;  
But never reached the town.  
The wretched parents all that night  
Went shouting far and wide ;  
But there was neither sound nor sight  
To serve them for a guide. 35

At day-break on a hill they stood  
 That overlooked the moor ;  
 And thence they saw the bridge of wood,  
 A furlong from their door. 40  
 They wept—and, turning homeward, cried,  
 “In Heaven we all shall meet :”  
 —When in the snow the mother spied  
 The print of Lucy’s feet.  
 Half breathless from the steep hill’s edge 45  
 They tracked the footmarks small ;  
 And through the broken hawthorn-hedge,  
 And by the long stone-wall ;  
 And then an open field they crossed :  
 The marks were still the same ; 50  
 They tracked them on, nor ever lost ;  
 And to the Bridge they came.  
 They followed from the snowy bank  
 Those footmarks, one by one,  
 Into the middle of the plank ; 55  
 And further there were none !  
 —Yet some maintain that to this day  
 She is a living child ;  
 That you may see sweet Lucy Gray  
 Upon the lonesome wild. 60  
 O’er rough and smooth she trips along  
 And never looks behind ;  
 And sings a solitary song  
 That whistles in the wind.

### 10. RUTH

WHEN Ruth was left half desolate,  
 Her father took another mate ;  
 And Ruth, not seven years old,  
 A slighted child, at her own will  
 Went wandering over dale and hill,  
 In thoughtless freedom bold.  
 And she had made a pipe of straw,  
 And from that oaten pipe could draw

All sounds of winds and floods ;  
Had built a bower upon the green,  
As if she from her birth had been  
An infant of the woods.

10

Beneath her father's roof, alone  
She seemed to live ; her thoughts her own ;  
Herself her own delight ;  
Pleased with herself, nor sad, nor gay ;  
And, passing thus the livelong day,  
She grew to woman's height.

15

There came a Youth from Georgia's shore—  
A military casque he wore,  
With splendid feathers drest ;  
He brought them from the Cherokees ;  
The feathers nodded in the breeze,  
And made a gallant crest.

20

From Indian blood you deem him sprung :  
Ah no ! he spake the English tongue,  
And bore a soldier's name ;  
And, when America was free  
From battle and from jeopardy,  
He 'cross the ocean came.

25

30

With hues of genius on his cheek  
In finest tones the Youth could speak :  
—While he was yet a boy,  
The moon, the glory of the sun,  
And streams that murmur as they run,  
Had been his dearest joy.

35

He was a lovely Youth ! I guess  
The panther in the wilderness  
Was not so fair as he ;  
And, when he chose to sport and play,  
No dolphin ever was so gay  
Upon the tropic sea.

40

Among the Indians he had fought  
And with him many tales he brought  
Of pleasure and of fear ;  
Such tales as told to any maid  
By such a youth, in the green shade,  
Were perilous to hear.

45

- He told of girls—a happy rout !  
Who quit their fold with dance and shout, 50  
Their pleasant Indian town,  
To gather strawberries all day long ;  
Returning with a choral song  
When daylight is gone down.
- He spake of plants divine and strange 55  
That every hour their blossoms change,  
Ten thousand lovely hues !  
With budding, fading, faded flowers  
They stand the wonder of the bowers  
From morn to evening dews. 60
- He told of the magnolia, spread  
High as a cloud, high over head !  
The cypress and her spire ;  
—Of flowers that with one scarlet gleam  
Cover a hundred leagues, and seem 65  
To set the hills on fire.
- The Youth of green savannahs spake,  
And many an endless, endless lake,  
With all its fairy crowds  
Of islands, that together lie 70  
As quietly as spots of sky  
Among the evening clouds.
- And then he said, “How sweet it were  
A fisher or a hunter there,  
A gardener in the shade, 75  
Still wandering with an easy mind  
To build a household fire, and find  
A home in every glade !
- “What days and what sweet years ! Ah me !  
Our life were life indeed, with thee 80  
So passed in quiet bliss,  
And all the while,” said he, “to know  
That we were in a world of woe,  
On such an earth as this !”
- And then he sometimes interwove 85  
Fond thoughts about a father’s love :  
“For there,” said he, “are spun  
Around the heart such tender ties,

That our own children to our eyes  
Are dearer than the sun.

90

"Sweet Ruth ! and could you go with me  
My helpmate in the woods to be,  
Our shed at night to rear ;  
Or run, my own adopted bride,  
A sylvan huntress at my side,  
And drive the flying deer !

95

"Beloved Ruth !"—No more he said.  
The wakeful Ruth at midnight shed  
A solitary tear :

She thought again—and did agree  
With him to sail across the sea,  
And drive the flying deer.

100

"And now, as fitting is and right,  
We in the church our faith will plight  
A husband and a wife."

105

Even so they did ; and I may say  
That to sweet Ruth that happy day  
Was more than human life.

Through dream and vision did she sink,  
Delighted all the while to think  
That on those lonesome floods,  
And green savannahs, she should share  
His board with lawful joy, and bear  
His name in the wild woods.

110

But, as you have before been told,  
This Stripling, sportive, gay, and bold,  
And with his dancing crest  
So beautiful, through savage lands  
Had roamed about, with vagrant bands  
Of Indians in the West.

115

The wind, the tempest roaring high,  
The tumult of a tropic sky,  
Might well be dangerous food  
For him, a Youth to whom was given  
So much of earth—so much of Heaven  
And such impetuous blood.

120

125

Whatever in those climes he found  
Irregular in sight or sound



- Did to his mind impart  
 A kindred impulse, seemed allied 130  
 To his own powers, and justified  
 The workings of his heart.  
 Nor less, to feed voluptuous thought,  
 The beauteous forms of nature wrought  
 Fair trees and lovely flowers ; 135  
 The breezes their own languor lent ;  
 The stars had feelings, which they sent  
 Into those gorgeous bowers.  
 Yet, in his worst pursuits, I ween  
 That sometimes there did intervene 140  
 Pure hopes of high intent :  
 For passions linked to forms so fair  
 And stately, needs must have their share  
 Of noble sentiment.  
 But ill he lived, much evil saw, 145  
 With men to whom no better law  
 Nor better life was known ;  
 Deliberately, and undeceived,  
 Those wild men's vices he received,  
 And gave them back his own. 150  
 His genius and his moral frame  
 Were thus impaired, and he became  
 The slave of low desires .  
 A man who without self-control  
 Would seek what the degraded soul 155  
 Unworthily admires.  
 And yet he with no feigned delight  
 Had wooed the Maiden, day and night  
 Had loved her, night and morn :  
 What could he less than love a maid 160  
 Whose heart with so much nature played ?  
 So kind and so forlorn !  
 Sometimes, most earnestly, he said,  
 "O Ruth ! I have been worse than dead ;  
 False thoughts, thoughts bold and vain, 165  
 Encompassed me on every side  
 When first, in confidence and pride,  
 I crossed the Atlantic Main.

"It was a fresh and glorious world,  
A banner bright that was unfurled  
Before me suddenly :

I looked upon those hills and plains,  
And seemed as if let loose from chains  
To live at liberty.

"But wherefore speak of this ? For now,  
Sweet Ruth ! with thee, I know not how,  
I feel my spirit burn—

Even as the east when day comes forth ;  
And, to the west, and south, and north,  
The morning doth return."

Full soon that purer mind was gone ;  
No hope, no wish remained, not one,—  
They stirred him now no more :  
New objects did new pleasure give,  
And once again he wished to live  
As lawless as before.

Meanwhile, as thus with him it fared,  
They for the voyage were prepared,  
And went to the sea-shore ;  
But, when they thither came, the Youth  
Deserted his poor Bride, and Ruth  
Could never find him more.

"God help thee, Ruth !"—Such pains she had,  
That she in half a year was mad,  
And in a prison housed ;  
And there she sang tumultuous songs,  
By recollection of her wrongs  
To fearful passion roused.

Yet sometimes milder hours she knew,  
Nor wanted sun, nor rain, nor dew,  
Nor pastimes of the May,  
—They all were with her in her cell ;  
And a wild brook with cheerful knell  
Did o'er the pebbles play.

When Ruth three seasons thus had lain  
There came a respite to her pain :  
She from her prison fled ;  
But of the vagrant none took thought ;

- And where it liked her best she sought  
Her shelter and her bread. 210
- Among the fields she breathed again,  
The master-current of her brain  
Ran permanent and free ;  
And, coming to the banks of Tone,  
There did she rest ; and dwell alone 215  
Under the greenwood tree.
- The engines of her pain, the tools  
That shaped her sorrow, rocks and pools  
And airs that gently stir  
The vernal leaves, she loved them still. 220  
Nor ever taxed them with the ill  
Which had been done to her.
- A barn her *winter* bed supplies ;  
But, till the warmth of summer skies  
And summer days is gone, 225  
(And all do in this tale agree)  
She sleeps beneath the greenwood tree,  
And other home hath none.
- An innocent life, yet far astray !  
And Ruth will, long before her day, 230  
Be broken down and old :  
Sore aches she needs must have ! but less  
Of mind, than body's wretchedness,  
From damp, and rain, and cold.
- If she is prest by want of food, 235  
She from her dwelling in the wood  
Repairs to a road-side ;  
And there she begs at one steep place  
Where up and down with easy pace  
The horsemen-travellers ride. 240
- That oaten pipe of hers is mute,  
Or thrown away ; but with a flute  
Her loneliness she cheers :  
This flute, made of a hemlock stalk,  
At evening in his homeward walk 245  
The Quantock woodman hears.
- I, too, have passed her on the hills  
Setting her little water-mills

By spouts and fountains wild—  
 Such small machinery as she turned  
 Ere she had wept, ere she had mourned,  
 A young and happy child !

250

Farewell ! and when thy days are told  
 Ill-fated Ruth ! in hallowed mould  
 Thy corpse shall buried be ;  
 For thee a funeral bell shall ring,  
 And all the congregation sing  
 A Christian psalm for thee.

255

## 11. THE FOUNTAIN

### *A Conversation*

We talked with open heart, and tongue  
 Affectionate and true,  
 A pair of Friends, though I was young,  
 And Matthew seventy-two.

We lay beneath a spreading oak,  
 Beside a mossy seat ;  
 And from the turf a fountain broke,  
 And gurgled at our feet.

5

"Now, Matthew !" said I, "let us match  
 This water's pleasant tune  
 With some old Border-song, or Catch,  
 That suits a summer's noon ;

10

"Or of the Church-clock and the chimes  
 Sing here beneath the shade,  
 That half-mad thing of witty rhymes  
 Which you last April made !"

15

In silence Matthew lay, and eyed  
 The spring beneath the tree ;  
 And thus the dear old man replied,  
 The gray-haired man of glee ;

20

"Down to the vale this water steers,  
 How merrily it goes !

'Twill murmur on a thousand years,  
And flow as now it flows.

"And here, on this delightful day, 25  
I cannot choose but think  
How oft, a vigorous man, I lay  
Beside this Fountain's brink.

"My eyes are dim with childish tears,  
My heart is idly stirred, 30  
For the same sound is in my ears  
Which in those days I heard.

"Thus fares it still in our decay :  
And yet the wiser mind  
Mourns less for what age takes away 35  
Than what it leaves behind.

"The Blackbird in the summer trees,  
The Lark upon the hill,  
Let loose their carols when they please,  
Are quiet when they will. 40

"With Nature never do *they* wage  
A foolish strife ; they see  
A happy youth, and their old age  
Is beautiful and free :

"But we are pressed by heavy laws ; 45  
And often, glad no more,  
We wear a face of joy, because  
We have been glad of yore.

"If there be one who need bemoan  
His kindred laid in earth, 50  
The household hearts that were his own,  
It is the man of mirth.

"My days, my Friend, are almost gone,  
My life has been approved,  
And many love me ; but by none 55  
Am I enough beloved."

"Now both himself and me he wrongs,  
The man who thus complains !  
I live and sing my idle songs  
Upon these happy plains, 60

"And, Matthew, for thy Children dead  
I'll be a son to thee !"

At this he grasped my hand, and said,  
"Alas ! that cannot be."

We rose up from the fountain-side ; 65  
And down the smooth descent  
Of the green sheep-track did we glide ;  
And through the wood we went ;

And, ere we came to Leonard's-rock,  
He sang those witty rhymes. 70  
About the crazy old church-clock,  
And the bewildered chimes.

## 12. THE TWO APRIL MORNINGS

We walked along, while bright and red  
Uprose the morning sun ;  
And Matthew stopped, he looked and said,  
"The will of God be done !"

A village Schoolmaster was he, 5  
With hair of glittering gray ;  
As blithe a man as you could see  
On a spring holiday.

And on that morning, through the grass  
And by the steaming rills, 10  
We travelled merrily, to pass  
A day among the hills.

"Our work," said I, "was well begun ;  
Then, from thy breast what thought,  
Beneath so beautiful a sun, 15  
So sad a sigh has brought ?"

A second time did Matthew stop ;  
And fixing still his eye  
Upon the eastern mountain-top,  
To me he made reply : 20

"Yon cloud with that long purple cleft  
Brings fresh into my mind

A day like this which I have left  
Full thirty years behind.

"And just above yon slope of corn  
Such colours, and no other,  
Were in the sky, that April morn,  
Of this the very brother. 25

"With rod and line I sued the sport  
Which that sweet season gave,  
And, coming to the church, stopped short  
Beside my daughter's grave. 30

"Nine summers had she scarcely seen,  
The pride of all the vale ;  
And then she sang ;—she would have been  
A very nightingale. 35

"Six feet in earth my Emma lay ;  
And yet I loved her more,  
For so it seemed, than till that day  
I e'er had loved before. 40

"And, turning from her grave, I met,  
Beside the churchyard yew,  
A blooming girl, whose hair was wet  
With points of morning dew.

"A basket on her head she bare ;  
Her brow was smooth and white :  
To see a child so very fair,  
It was a pure delight ! 45

"No fountain from its rocky cave  
E'er tripped with foot so free ;  
She seemed as happy as a wave  
That dances on the sea. 50

"There came from me a sigh of pain  
Which I could ill confine ;  
I looked at her, and looked again :  
—And did not wish her mine." 55

Matthew is in his grave, yet now,  
Methinks, I see him stand,  
As at that moment, with a bough  
Of wilding in his hand. 60



## 13. MICHAEL

*A Pastoral Poem*

If from the public way you turn your steps  
 Up the tumultuous brook of Green-head Ghyll,  
 You will suppose that with an upright path  
 Your feet must struggle ; in such bold ascent  
 The pastoral mountains front you, face to face. 5  
 But, courage ! for around that boisterous Brook  
 The mountains have all opened out themselves,  
 And made a hidden valley of their own.  
 No habitation can be seen ; but they  
 Who journey hither find themselves alone 10  
 With a few sheep, with rocks and stones, and kites  
 That overhead are sailing in the sky.  
 It is in truth an utter solitude ;  
 Nor should I have made mention of this Dell  
 But for one object which you might pass by, 15  
 Might see and notice not. Beside the brook  
 Appears a straggling heap of unhewn stones !  
 And to that place a story appertains,  
 Which, though it be ungarnished with events,  
 Is not unfit, I deem, for the fireside, 20  
 Or for the summer shade. It was the first  
 Of those domestic tales that spake to me  
 Of Shepherds, dwellers in the valleys, men  
 Whom I already loved ;—not verily  
 For their own sakes, but for the fields and hills 25  
 Where was their occupation and abode.  
 And hence this tale, while I was yet a Boy  
 Careless of books, yet having felt the power  
 Of Nature, by the gentle agency  
 Of natural objects led me on to feel 30  
 For passions that were not my own, and think  
 (At random and imperfectly indeed)  
 On man, the heart of man, and human life,  
 Therefore, although it be a history  
 Homely and rude, I will relate the same 35  
 For the delight of a few natural hearts ;  
 And, with yet fonder feeling, for the sake



Of youthful Poets, who among these Hills  
Will be my second self when I am gone.

Upon the Forest-side in Grasmere Vale 40  
There dwelt a Shepherd, Michael was his name ;  
An old man, stout of heart, and strong of limb.  
His bodily frame had been from youth to age  
Of an unusual strength : his mind was keen,  
Intense, and frugal, apt for all affairs, 45  
And in his Shepherd's calling he was prompt  
And watchful more than ordinary men.  
Hence had he learned the meaning of all winds,  
Of blasts of every tone ; and, oftentimes,  
When others headed not, He heard the South 50  
Make subterraneous music, like the noise  
Of Bagpipers on distant Highland hills.  
The Shepherd, at such warning, of his flock  
Bethought him, and he to himself would say,  
"The winds are now devising work for me !" 55  
And, truly, at all times, the storm—that drives  
The traveller to a shelter—summoned him  
Up to the mountains : he had been alone  
Amid the heart of many thousand mists,  
That came to him and left him on the heights. 60  
So lived he till his eightieth year was past.  
And grossly that man errs, who should suppose  
That the green Valleys, and the Streams and Rocks,  
Were things indifferent to the Shepherd's thoughts.  
Fields, where with cheerful spirits he had breathed 65  
The common air ; the hills, which he so oft  
Had climbed with vigorous steps ; which had impressed  
So many incidents upon his mind  
Of hardship, skill or courage, joy or fear ;  
Which, like a look, preserved the memory 70  
Of the dumb animals, whom he had saved,  
Had fed or sheltered, linking to such acts,  
The certainty of honourable gain,  
Those fields, those hills—what could they less ? had laid  
Strong hold on his affections, were to him 75  
A pleasurable feeling of blind love,  
The pleasure which there is in life itself.

His days had not been passed in singleness.  
 His Helpmate was a comely Matron, old— 80  
 Though younger than himself full twenty years.  
 She was a woman of a stirring life,  
 Whose heart was in her house : two wheels she had  
 Of antique form, this large for spinning wool,  
 That small for flax ; and if one wheel had rest, 85  
 It was because the other was at work.  
 The Pair had but one inmate in their house,  
 An only Child, who had been born to them  
 When Michael, telling o'er his years, began  
 To deem that he was old,—in Shepherd's phrase, 90  
 With one foot in the grave. This only Son  
 With two brave Sheep-dogs tried in many a storm.  
 The one of an inestimable worth,  
 Made all their household. I may truly say,  
 That they were as a proverb in the vale 95  
 For endless industry. When day was gone,  
 And from their occupations out of doors  
 The Son and Father were come home, even then  
 Their labour did not cease ; unless when all  
 Turned to their cleanly supper-board, and there, 100  
 Each with a mess of pottage and skimmed milk,  
 Sat round their basket piled with oaten cakes,  
 And their plain home-made cheese. Yet when their meal  
 Was ended, LUKE (for so the Son was named)  
 And his old Father both betook themselves 105  
 To such convenient work as might employ  
 Their hands by the fireside ; perhaps to card  
 Wool for the Housewife's spindle, or repair  
 Some injury done to sickle, flail, or scythe,  
 Or other implement of house or field. 110  
 Down from the ceiling, by the chimney's edge,  
 That in our ancient uncouth country style  
 Did with a huge projection overbrow  
 Large space beneath, as duly as the light  
 Of day grew dim the Housewife hung a Lamp ; 115  
 An aged utensil, which had performed  
 Service beyond all others of its kind.  
 Early at evening did it burn and late,  
 Surviving comrade of uncounted Hours,

Which, going by from year to year, had found,  
 And left the couple neither gay perhaps 120  
 Nor cheerful, yet with objects and with hopes,  
 Living a life of eager industry.  
 And now, when LUKE had reached his eighteenth year  
 There by the light of this old lamp they sat,  
 Father and Son, while late into the night 125  
 The Housewife plied her own peculiar work,  
 Making the cottage through the silent hours  
 Murmur as with the sound of summer flies.  
 This Light was famous in its neighbourhood,  
 And was a public symbol of the life 130  
 That thrifty Pair had lived. For, as it chanced,  
 Their Cottage on a plot of rising ground  
 Stood single, with large prospect, North and South,  
 High into Easedale, up to Dunmail-Raise,  
 And westward to the village near the Lake ; 135  
 And from this constant light, so regular  
 And so far seen, the House itself, by all  
 Who dwelt within the limits of the vale,  
 Both old and young, was named THE EVENING STAR.

Thus living on through such a length of years, 140  
 The Shepherd, if he loved himself, must needs  
 Have loved his Helpmate ; but to Michael's heart  
 This Son of his old age was yet more dear—  
 Less from instinctive tenderness, the same  
 Blind spirit, which is in the blood of all— 145  
 Than that a child more than all other gifts,  
 Brings hope with it, and forward-looking thoughts,  
 And stirrings or inquietude, when they  
 By tendency of nature needs must fail.  
 Exceeding was the love he bare to him, 150  
 His Heart and his Heart's joy ! For oftentimes  
 Old Michael, while he was a babe in arms,  
 Had done him female service, not alone  
 For pastime and delight, as is the use  
 Of fathers, but with patient mind enforced 155  
 To acts of tenderness ; and he had rocked  
 His cradle with a woman's gentle hand.

And, in a later time, ere yet the Boy  
 Had put on boy's attire, did Michael love,

Albeit of a stern unbending mind,  
 To have the Young-one in his sight, when he  
 Had work by his own door, or when he sat  
 With sheep before him on his Shepherd's stool,  
 Beneath that large old Oak, which near their door  
 Stood,—and, from its enormous breadth of shade  
 Chosen for the shearer's covert from the sun,  
 Thence in our rustic dialect was called  
 The CLIPPING TREE,<sup>1</sup> a name which yet it bears.  
 There, while they two were sitting in the shade,  
 With others round them, earnest all and blithe,  
 Would Michael exercise his heart with looks  
 Of fond correction and reproof bestowed  
 Upon the Child, if he disturbed the sheep  
 By catching at their legs, or with his shouts  
 Scared them, while they lay still beneath the shears.

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And when by Heaven's good grace the Boy grew up  
 A healthy lad, and carried in his cheek  
 Two steady roses that were five years old,  
 Then Michael from a winter coppice cut  
 With his own hand a sapling, which he hooped  
 With iron, making it throughout in all  
 Due requisites a perfect Shepherd's Staff,  
 And gave it to the Boy ; wherewith equipt  
 He as a watchman oftentimes was placed  
 At gate or gap, to stem or turn the flock ;  
 And, to his office prematurely called,  
 There stood the Urchin, as you will divine,  
 Something between a hinderance and a help ;  
 And for this cause not always, I believe,  
 Receiving from his Father hire of praise ;  
 Though nought was left undone which staff, or voice,  
 Or looks, or threatening gestures, could perform.

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But soon as Luke, full ten years old, could stand  
 Against the mountain blasts ; and to the heights,  
 Not fearing toil, nor length of weary ways,  
 He with his Father daily went, and they  
 Were as companions, why should I relate

195

<sup>1</sup> Clipping is the word used in the North of England for shearing.

That objects which the Shepherd loved before  
 Were dearer now ? that from the Boy there came  
 Feelings and emanations—things which were 200  
 Light to the sun and music to the wind ;  
 And that the Old Man's heart seemed born again ?

Thus in his Father's sight the boy grew up :  
 And now, when he had reached his eighteenth year,  
 He was his comfort and his daily hope. 205

While in this sort the simple Household lived  
 From day to day, to Michael's ear there came  
 Distressful tidings. Long before the time  
 Of which I speak, the Shepherd had been bound  
 In surety for his Brother's Son, a man 210  
 Of an industrious life, and ample means,—  
 But unforeseen misfortunes suddenly  
 Had prest upon him,—and old Michael now  
 Was summoned to discharge the forfeiture,  
 A grievous penalty, but little less 215  
 Than half his substance. This unlooked-for claim,  
 At the first hearing, for a moment took  
 More hope out of his life than he supposed  
 That any old man ever could have lost.  
 As soon as he had gathered so much strength 220  
 That he could look his trouble in the face,  
 It seemed that his sole refuge was to sell  
 A portion of his patrimonial fields.  
 Such was his first resolve ; he thought again,  
 And his heart failed him. "Isabel," said he, 225  
 Two evenings after he had heard the news,  
 "I have been toiling more than seventy years,  
 And in the open sunshine of God's love  
 Have we all lived ; yet if these fields of ours  
 Should pass into a stranger's hand, I think 230  
 That I could not lie quiet in my grave.  
 Our lot is a hard lot ; the sun himself  
 Has scarcely been more diligent than I ;  
 And I have lived to be a fool at last  
 To my own family. An evil Man 235  
 That was, and made an evil choice, if he  
 Were false to us ; and if he were not false,

There are ten thousand to whom loss like this  
 Had been no sorrow. I forgive him—but 240  
 'Twere better to be dumb than to talk thus.  
 When I began, my purpose was to speak  
 Of remedies, and of a cheerful hope.  
 Our Luke shall leave us, Isabel ; the land  
 Shall not go from us, and it shall be free ; 245  
 He shall possess it, free as is the wind  
 That passes over it. We have, thou know'st,  
 Another Kinsman—he will be our friend  
 In this distress. He is a prosperous man,  
 Thriving in trade—and Luke to him shall go, 250  
 And with his Kinsman's help and his own thrift  
 He quickly will repair this loss, and then  
 May come again to us. If here he stay,  
 What can be done ? Where every one is poor,  
 What can be gained ?" At this the Old Man paused, 255  
 And Isabel sat silent, for her mind  
 Was busy, looking back into past times.  
 There's Richard Bateman, thought she to herself,  
 He was a Parish-boy—at the Church-door  
 They made a gathering for him, shillings, pence,  
 And halfpennies, wherewith the neighbours bought 260  
 A basket, which they filled with pedlar's wares ;  
 And, with this basket on his arm, the Lad  
 Went up to London, found a Master there,  
 Who, out of many, chose the trusty Boy 265  
 To go and overlook his merchandise  
 Beyond the seas : where he grew wondrous rich,  
 And left estates and monies to the poor,  
 And, at his birth-place, built a Chapel floored  
 With marble, which he sent from foreign lands. 270  
 These thoughts, and many others of like sort,  
 Passed quickly through the mind of Isabel,  
 And her face brightened. The Old Man was glad,  
 And thus resumed—"Well, Isabel ! this scheme,  
 These two days, has been meat and drink to me. 275  
 Far more than we have lost is left us yet.  
 We have enough—I wish indeed that I  
 Were younger,—but this hope is a good hope.  
 —Make ready Luke's best garments, of the best

Buy for him more, and let us send him forth  
 To-morrow, or the next day, or to-night : 280  
 —If he *could* go, the Boy should go to-night.”  
 Here Michael ceased, and to the fields went forth  
 With a light heart. The Housewife for five days  
 Was restless morn and night, and all day long  
 Wrought on with her best fingers to prepare 285  
 Things needful for the journey of her son.  
 But Isabel was glad when Sunday came  
 To stop her in her work : for when she lay  
 By Michael's side, she through the two last nights  
 Heard him, how he was troubled in his sleep : 290  
 And when they rose at morning she could see  
 That all his hopes were gone. That day at noon  
 She said to Luke, while they two by themselves  
 Were sitting at the door, “Thus must not go ;  
 We have no other Child but thee to lose, 295  
 None to remember—do not go away,  
 For if thou leave thy Father he will die.”  
 The Youth made answer with a jocund voice ;  
 And Isabel, when she had told her fears,  
 Recovered heart. That evening her best fare 300  
 Did she bring forth, and all together sat  
 Like happy people round a Christmas fire.

With daylight Isabel resumed her work ;  
 And all the ensuing week the house appeared  
 As cheerful as a grove in Spring : at length 305  
 The expected letter from their Kinsman came,  
 With kind assurances that he would do  
 His utmost for the walfare of the Boy ;  
 To which, requests were added, that forthwith  
 He might be sent to him. Ten times or more 310  
 The letter was read over ; Isabel  
 Went forth to show it to the neighbours round ;  
 Nor was there at that time on English land  
 A prouder heart than Luke's. When Isabel  
 Had to her house returned, the Old Man said, 315  
 He shall depart to-morrow.” To this word  
 The Housewife answered, talking much of things  
 Which, if at such short notice he should go,



Would surely be forgotten. But at length  
She gave consent, and Michael was at ease. 320

Near the tumultuous brook of Green-head Ghyll,  
In that deep Valley, Michael had designed  
To build a Sheep-fold ; and, before he heard  
The tidings of his melancholy loss,  
For this same purpose he had gathered up 325  
A heap of stones, which by the Streamlet's edge  
Lay thrown together, ready for the work.  
With Luke that evening thitherward he walked ;  
And soon as they had reached the place he stopped  
And thus the Old Man spake to him :—"My Son, 330  
To-morrow thou wilt leave me : with full heart  
I look upon thee, for thou art the same  
That wert a promise to me ere thy birth,  
And all thy life hast been my daily joy.  
I will relate to thee some little part 335  
Of our two histories ; 'twill do thee good  
When thou art from me, even if I should speak  
Of things thou canst not know of.—After thou  
First camest into the world—as oft befalls  
To new-born infants—thou didst sleep away 340  
Two days, and blessings from thy Father's tongue  
Then fell upon thee. Day by day passed on,  
And still I loved thee with increasing love.  
Never to living ear came sweeter sounds  
Than when I heard thee by our own fireside 345  
First uttering, without words, a natural tune ;  
When thou, a feeding babe, didst in thy joy  
Sing at thy Mother's breast. Month followed month,  
And in the open fields my life was passed  
And on the mountains ; else I think that thou 350  
Hadst been brought up upon thy Father's knees.  
But we were playmates, Luke : among these hills,  
As well thou knowest, in us the old and young  
Have played together, nor with me didst thou  
Lack any pleasure which a boy can know." 355  
Luke had a manly heart ; but at these words  
He sobbed aloud. The Old Man grasped his hand,  
And said, "Nay, do not take it so—I see  
That these are things of which I need not speak.



—Even to the utmost I have been to thee 360  
 A kind and a good Father : and herein  
 I but repay a gift which I myself  
 Received at others' hands ; for, though now old  
 Beyond the common life of man, I still  
 Remember them who loved me in my youth 365  
 Both of them sleep together : here they lived,  
 As all their Forefathers had done ; and when  
 At length their time was come, they were not loth  
 To give their bodies to the family mould.  
 I wished that thou shouldst live the life they lived. 370  
 But, 'tis a long time to look back, my Son,  
 And see so little gain from threescore years.  
 These fields were burthened when they came to me ;  
 Till I was forty years of age, not more  
 Than half of my inheritance was mine. 375  
 I toiled and toiled ; God blessed me in my work,  
 And till these three weeks past the land was free.  
 —It looks as if it never could endure  
 Another Master. Heaven forgive me, Luke,  
 If I judge ill for thee, but it seems good 380  
 That thou shouldst go." At this the Old Man paused ;  
 Then, pointing to the Stones near which they stood,  
 Thus, after a short silence, he resumed :  
 "This was a work for us ; and now, my Son,  
 It is a work for me. But, lay one stone— 385  
 Here, lay it for me, Luke, with thine own hands,  
 Nay, Boy, be of good hope ;—we both may live  
 To see a better day. At eighty-four  
 I still am strong and hale ;—do thou thy part ;  
 I will do mine.—I will begin again 390  
 With many tasks that were resigned to thee :  
 Up to the heights, and in among the storms,  
 Will I without thee go again, and do  
 All works which I was wont to do alone,  
 Before I knew thy face.—Heaven bless thee, Boy ! 395  
 Thy heart these two weeks has been beating fast  
 With many hopes.—It should be so—Yes—yes—  
 I knew that thou couldst never have a wish  
 To leave me, Luke ; thou hast been bound to me  
 Only by links of love : when thou art gone 400

What will be left to us !—But, I forget  
My purposes. Lay now the corner-stone,  
As I requested ; and hereafter, Luke,  
When thou art gone away, should evil men  
Be thy companions, think of me, my Son, 405  
And of this moment ; hither turn thy thoughts,  
And God will strengthen thee : amid all fear  
And all temptation, Luke, I pray that thou  
Mayst bear in mind the life thy Fathers lived,  
Who, being innocent, did for that cause 410  
Bestir them in good deeds. Now, fare thee well—  
When thou returnest, thou in this place wilt see  
A work which is not here : a covenant  
'Twill be between us——But, whatever fate  
Befall thee, I shall love thee to the last, 415  
And bear thy memory with me to the grave.”

The Shepherd ended here ; and Luke stooped down,  
And, as his Father had requested, laid  
The first stone of the Sheep-fold. At the sight  
The Old Man's grief broke from him ; to his heart 420  
He pressed his son, he kissed him and wept ;  
And to the house together they returned.  
—Hushed was that House in peace, or seeming peace,  
Ere the night fell :—with morrow's dawn the Boy  
Began his journey, and when he had reached 425  
The public way, he put on a bold face ;  
And all the neighbours, as he passed their doors,  
Came forth with wishes and with farewell prayers,  
That followed him till he was out of sight.

A good report did from their Kinsman come, 430  
Of Luke and his well-doing : and the Boy  
Wrote loving letters, full of wondrous news,  
Which, as the Housewife phrased it, were throughout  
“The prettiest letters that were ever seen.”  
Both parents read them with rejoicing hearts. 435  
So, many months passed on : and once again  
The Shepherd went about his daily work  
With confident and cheerful thoughts ; and now  
Sometimes when he could find a leisure hour  
He to that valley took his way, and there 440

Wrought at the Sheep-fold. Meantime Luke began  
 To slacken in his duty ; and, at length  
 He in the dissolute city gave himself  
 To evil co urses : ignominy and shame  
 Fell on him, so that he was driven at last  
 To seek a hiding-place beyond the seas. 445

There is a comfort in the strength of love ;  
 'Twill make a thing endurable, which else  
 Would upset the brain, or break the heart ;  
 I have conversed with more than one who well 450  
 Remember the Old Man, and what he was  
 Years after he had heard this heavy news.  
 His bodily frame had been from youth to age  
 Of an unusual strength. Among the rocks  
 He went, and still looked up towards the sun, 455  
 And listened to the wind ; and, as before,  
 Performed all kinds of labour for his Sheep,  
 And for the land his small inheritance.  
 And to that hollow Dell from time to time  
 Did he repair, to build the Fold of which 460  
 His flock had need. 'Tis not forgotten yet  
 The pity which was then in every heart  
 For the Old Man—and 'tis believed by all  
 That many and many a day he thither went,  
 And never lifted up a single stone. 465

There, by the Sheep-fold, sometimes was he seen  
 Sitting alone, with that his faithful Dog,  
 Then old, beside him, lying at his feet.  
 The length of full seven years, from time to time,  
 He at the building of this sheep-fold wrought, 470  
 And left the work unfinished when he died.  
 Three years, or little more, did Isabel  
 Survive her Husband : at her death the estate  
 Was sold, and went into a stranger's hand.  
 The Cottage which was named the EVENING STAR 475  
 Is gone—the ploughshare has been through the ground  
 On which it stood ; great changes have been wrought  
 In all the neighbourhood :—yet the Oak is left  
 That grew beside their door ; and the remains  
 Of the unfinished Sheep-fold may be seen 480  
 Beside the boisterous brook of Green-head Ghyll.

## 14. THE SPARROW'S NEST

BEHOLD, within the leafy shade,  
 Those bright blue eggs together laid !  
 On me the chance-discovered sight  
 Gleamed like a vision of delight.  
 I started—seeming to espy 5  
 The home and sheltered bed,  
 The Sparrow's dwelling, which, hard by  
 My Father's house, in wet or dry  
 My Sister Emmeline and I  
 Together visited. 10

She looked at it as if she feared it ;  
 Still wishing, dreading, to be near it :  
 Such heart was in her, being then  
 A little Prattler among men.  
 The Blessing of my later years 15  
 Was with me when a Boy :  
 She gave me eyes, she gave me ears ;  
 And humble cares, and delicate fears ;  
 A heart, the fountain of sweet tears ;  
 And love, and thought, and joy. 20

## 15. ALICE FELL

*Or, Poverty*

THE post-boy drove with fierce career,  
 For threatening clouds the moon had drowned ;  
 When, as we hurried on, my ear  
 Was smitten with a startling sound.  
 As if the wind blew many ways, 5  
 I heard the sound,—and more and more ;  
 It seemed to follow with the chaise,  
 And still I heard it as before.

At length I to the boy called out ;  
 He stopped his horses at the word, 10  
 But neither cry, nor voice, nor shout,  
 Nor aught else like it, could be heard.

- The boy then smacked his whip, and fast  
 The horses scampered through the rain :  
 But, hearing soon upon the blast  
 The cry, I bade him halt again. 15
- Forthwith alighting on the ground,  
 "Whence comes," said I, "this piteous moan ?"  
 And there a little Girl I found,  
 Sitting behind the chaise, alone. 20
- "My cloak !" no other word she spake,  
 But loud and bitterly she wept,  
 As if her innocent heart would break ;  
 And down from off her seat she leapt.
- "What ails you, child ?"—she sobbed "Look here !" 25  
 I saw it in the wheel entangled,  
 A weather-beaten rag as e'er  
 From any garden scare-crow dangled.
- There, twisted between nave and spoke,  
 It hung, nor could at once be freed ; 30  
 But our joint pains unloosed the cloak,  
 A miserable rag indeed !
- "And whither are you going, child,  
 To-night along these lonesome ways ?"  
 "To Durham," answered she half wild— 35  
 "Then come with me into the chaise."
- Insensible to all relief  
 Sat the poor girl, and forth did send  
 Sob after sob, as if her grief  
 Could never, never have an end. 40
- "My child, in Durham do you dwell ?"  
 She checked herself in her distress,  
 And said, "My name is Alice Fell ;  
 I'm fatherless and motherless.
- "And I to Durham, Sir, belong." 45  
 Again, as if the thought would choke  
 Her very heart, her grief grew strong ;  
 And all was for her tattered cloak !
- The chaise drove on ; our journey's end  
 Was nigh ; and sitting by my side, 50

As if she had lost her only friend  
She wept, nor would be pacified.

Up to the tavern-door we post ;  
Of Alice and her grief I told ;  
And I gave money to the host,  
To buy a new cloak for the old.

55

"And let it be of duffil grey,  
As warm a cloak as man can sell !"  
Proud creature was she the next day,  
The little orphan, Alice Fell !

60

## 16. TWO VOICES ARE THERE

[*Thought of a Briton on the Subjugation of Switzerland.*]

Two Voices are there : one is of the Sea,  
One of the Mountains ; each a mighty Voice :  
In both from age to age Thou didst rejoice,  
They were thy chosen Music, Liberty !  
There came a Tyrant, and with holy glee  
Thou fought'st against Him ; but hast vainly striven :  
Thou from the Alpline holds at length art driven,  
Where not a torrent murmurs heard by thee.  
Of one deep bliss thine ear hath been bereft :  
Then cleave, O cleave to that which still is left ;  
For, high-souled Maid, what sorrow would it be  
That mountain Floods should thunder as before,  
And Ocean bellow from his rocky shore,  
And neither awful Voice be heard by thee !

5

10

## 17. THE WORLD IS TOO MUCH

THE world is too much with us ; late and soon,  
Getting and spending, we lay waste our powers :  
Little we see in Nature that is ours ;  
We have given our hearts away, a sordid boon !  
This Sea that bares her bosom to the moon ;  
The winds that will be howling at all hours,  
And are up-gathered now like sleeping flowers ;

5

For this, for every thing, we are out of tune ;  
 It moves us not.—Great God ! I'd rather be  
 A Pagan suckled in a creed outworn ; 10  
 So might I, standing on this pleasant lea,  
 Have glimpses that would make me less forlorn ;  
 Have sight of Proteus rising from the sea ;  
 Or hear old Triton blow his wreathed horn.

### 18. MILTON ! THOU SHOULDST BE LIVING

[*London, 1802*]

MILTON ! thou shouldst be living at this hour :  
 England hath need of thee : she is a fen  
 Of stagnant waters : altar, sword, and pen,  
 Fireside, the heroic wealth of hall and bower,  
 Have forfeited their ancient English dower 5  
 Of inward happiness. We are selfish men ;  
 Oh ! raise us up, return to us again ;  
 And give us manners, virtue, freedom, power.  
 Thy soul was like a Star, and dwelt apart :  
 Thou hadst a voice whose sound was like the sea ; 10  
 Pure as the naked heavens, majestic, free,  
 So didst thou travel on life's common way,  
 In cheerful godliness ; and yet thy heart  
 The lowliest duties on herself did lay.

### 19. UPON WESTMINSTER BRIDGE

[*Sept. 3, 1803*]

EARTH has not anything to show more fair ;  
 Dull would he be of soul who could pass by  
 A sight so touching in its majesty :  
 This City now doth like a garment wear  
 The beauty of the morning : silent, bare, 5  
 Ships, towers, domes, theatres, and temples lie  
 Open unto the fields, and to the sky ;  
 All bright and glittering in the smokeless air.  
 Never did sun more beautifully steep  
 In his first splendour valley, rock, or hill ; 10

Ne'er saw I, never felt, a calm so deep !  
 The river glideth at his own sweet will ;  
 Dear God ! the very houses seem asleep ;  
 And all that mighty heart is lying still !

## 20. T IS A BEAUTEOUS EVENING

*[Composed upon the Beach near Calais, 1802]*

It is a beauteous Evening, calm and free ;  
 The holy time is quiet as a Nun  
 Breathless with adoration ; the broad sun  
 Is sinking down in its tranquillity ;  
 The gentleness of heaven is on the sea : 5  
 Listen ! the mighty Being is awake,  
 And doth with his eternal motion make  
 A sound like thunder—everlastingly.  
 Dear Child ! dear Girl ! that walkest with me here,  
 If thou appear'st untouched by solemn thought, 10  
 Thy nature is not therefore less divine :  
 Thou liest in Abraham's bosom all the year ;  
 And worshipp'st at the Temple's inner shrine,  
 God being with thee when we know it not.

## 21. TO THE CUCKOO

O BLITHE New-comer ! I have heard,  
 I hear thee and rejoice.  
 O Cuckoo ! shall I call thee Bird,  
 Or but a wandering Voice ?  
 While I am lying on the grass 5  
 Thy twofold shout I hear ;  
 From hill to hill it seems to pass,  
 At once far off and near.  
 Though babbling only, to the Vale,  
 Of sunshine and of flowers 10  
 Thou bringest unto me a tale  
 Of visionary hours.  
 Thrice welcome, darling of the Spring !  
 Even yet thou art to me



No Bird : but an invisible Thing, A voice, a mystery ;	15
The same whom in my School-boy days I listened to ; that Cry Which made me look a thousand ways In bush, and tree, and sky.	20
To seek thee did I often rove Through woods and on the green ; And thou wert still a love ; Still longed for, never seen.	
And I can listen to thee yet ; Can lie upon the plain And listen, till I do beget That golden time again.	25
O blessed Bird ! the earth we pace Again appears to be An unsubstantial, faery place ; That is fit home for Thee !	30

## 22. RAINBOW

My heart leaps up when I behold A rainbow in the sky ; So was it when my life began ; So is it now I am a man ; So be it when I shall grow old, Or let me die.	5
The Child is father of the Man ; And I could wish my days to be Bound each to each by natural piety.	

## 23. ODE ON INTIMATIONS OF IMMORTALITY

*From recollections of early childhood*

### I

THERE was a time when meadow, grove, and stream,  
The earth, and every common sight,

To me did seem  
 Apparelled in celestial light,  
 The glory and the freshness of a dream. 5  
 It is not now as it hath been of yore ;—  
 Turn wheresoe'er I may,  
 By night or day,  
 The things which I have seen I now can see no more.

## II

The Rainbow comes and goes, 10  
 And lovely is the Rose ;  
 The moon doth with delight  
 Look round her when the heavens are bare,  
 Waters on a starry night  
 Are beautiful and fair ; 15  
 The sunshine is a glorious birth ;  
 But yet I know, where'er I go,  
 That there hath past away a glory from the earth.

## III

Now, while the Birds thus sing a joyous song,  
 And while the young Lambs bound 20  
 As to the tabor's sound,  
 To me alone there came a thought of grief :  
 A timely utterance gave that thought relief,  
 And I again am strong :  
 The Cataracts blow their trumpets from the steep ; 25  
 No more shall grief of mine the season wrong ;  
 I hear the Echoes through the mountains throng,  
 The Winds come to me from the fields of sleep,  
 And all the earth is gay ;  
 Land and sea 30  
 Give themselves up to jollity,  
 And with the heart of May  
 Doth every beast keep holiday ;—  
 Thou child of joy,  
 Shout round me, let me hear thy shouts, thou happy 35  
 Shepherd-boy !

## IV

Ye blessed Creatures, I have heard the call  
 Ye to each other make ; I see

The heavens laugh with you in your jubilee ;  
     My heart is at your festival, 40  
     My head hath its coronal,  
 The fulness of your bliss, I feel—I feel it all.  
     O evil day ! if I were sullen  
     While the Earth herself is adorning  
         This sweet May-morning, 45  
     And the children are pulling  
         On every side,  
     In a thousand valleys far and wide  
     Fresh flowers ; while the sun shines warm,  
 And the babe leaps up on his mother's arm ; 50  
     I hear, I hear, with joy I hear !  
     —But there's a Tree, of many one,  
 A single Field which I have looked upon,  
 Both of them speak of something that is gone ;  
         The Pansy at my feet 55  
         Doth the same tale repeat :  
 Whither is fled the visionary gleam ?  
 Where is it now, the glory and the dream ?

## V

Our birth is but a sleep and a forgetting  
 The Soul that rises with us, our life's Star, 60  
     Hath had elsewhere its setting,  
     And cometh from afar :  
     Not in entire forgetfulness,  
     And not in utter nakedness,  
 But trailing clouds of glory do we come 65  
     From God, who is our home :  
 Heaven lies about us in our infancy !  
 Shades of the prison-house begin to close  
     Upon the growing Boy,  
 But He beholds the light, and whence it flows 70  
     He sees it in his joy ;  
 The Youth, who daily farther from the East  
     Must travel, still is Nature's Priest,  
     And by the vision splendid  
     Is on his way attended ; 75  
 At length the Man perceives it die away,  
 And fade into the light of common day.

## VI

Earth fills her lap with pleasures of her own ;  
 Yearnings she hath in her own natural kind,  
 And even with something of a mother's mind, 80  
     And no unworthy aim,  
     The homely Nurse doth all she can  
 To make her foster-child, her inmate Man,  
     Forget the glories he hath known,  
 And that imperial place whence he came. 85

## VII

Behold the Child among his new-born blisses,  
 A six years' darling of a pigmy size !  
 See, where 'mid work of his own hand he lies,  
 Fretted by sallies of his Mother's kisses,  
 With light upon him from his Father's eyes ! 90  
 See, at his feet, some little plan or chart,  
 Some fragment from his dream of human life,  
 Shaped by himself with newly-learned art ;  
     A wedding or a festival,  
     A mourning or a funeral, 95  
     And this hath now his heart,  
 And unto this he frames his song :  
     Then will he fit his tongue  
 To dialogues of business, love, or strife ;  
     But it will not be long 100  
     Ere this be thrown aside,  
     And with new joy and pride  
 The little Actor cons another part ;  
 Filling from time to time his "humorous stage"  
 With all the persons, down to palsied age, 105  
 That Life brings with her in her equipage ;  
     As if his whole vocation  
     Were endless imitation.

## VIII

Thou, whose exterior semblance doth belie  
     Thy soul's immensity ; 110  
 Thou best Philosopher, who yet dost keep  
 Thy heritage, thou Eye among the blind,  
 That, deaf and silent, read'st the eternal deep,

Haunted for ever by the eternal mind,—  
     Mighty Prophet ! Seer blest ! 115  
     On whom those truths do rest,  
 Which we are toiling all our lives to find,  
 In darkness lost, the darkness of the grave,  
 Thou, over whom thy immortality  
 Broods like the day, a master o'er a slave, 120  
 A presence which is not to be put by ;  
 Thou little Child, yet glorious in the might  
 Of heaven-born freedom on thy being's height,  
 Why with such earnest pains dost thou provoke  
 The years to bring the inevitable yoke, 125  
 Thus blindly with thy blessedness at strife ?  
 Full soon thy soul shall have her earthly freight,  
 And custom lie upon thee with a weight,  
 Heavy as frost, and deep almost as life !

## IX

    O joy ! that in our embers 130  
     Is something that doth live  
     That nature yet remembers  
     What was so fugitive !  
 The thought of our past years in me doth breed  
 Perpetual benediction : not indeed 135  
 For that which is most worthy to be blest ;  
 Delight and liberty, the simple creed  
 Of childhood, whether busy or at rest,  
 With new-fledged hope still fluttering in his breast :—  
     Not for these I raise 140  
     The song of thanks and praise ;  
     But for those obstinate questionings  
     Of sense and outward things,  
     Fallings from us, vanishings ;  
     Blank misgivings of a Creature 145  
 Moving about in worlds not realised,  
 High instincts before which our mortal Nature  
 Did tremble like a guilty thing surprised :  
     But for those first affections,  
     Those shadowy recollections, 150  
     Which, be they what they may,  
 Are yet the fountain light of all our day,  
 Are yet a master light of all our seeing ;

Uphold us, cherish, and have power to make  
 Our noisy years seem moments in the being 155  
 Of the eternal Silence : truths that wake,  
     To perish never ;  
 Which neither listlessness, nor mad endeavour  
     Nor Man nor Boy,  
 Nor all that is at enmity with joy, 160  
 Can utterly abolish or destroy !  
     Hence, in a season of calm weather,  
     Though inland far we be,  
 Our souls have sight of that immortal sea  
     Which brought us hither, 165  
     Can in a moment travel thither,  
 And see the children sport upon the shore,  
 And hear the mighty waters rolling evermore.

## X

Then sing, ye Birds, sing, sing a joyous song !  
     And let the young Lambs bound 170  
     As to the tabor's sound !  
 We in thought will join your throng,  
     Ye that pipe and ye that play,  
     Ye that through your hearts to-day  
     Feel the gladness of the May ! 175  
 What though the radiance which was once so bright  
 Be now for ever taken from my sight,  
     Though nothing can bring back the hour  
 Of splendour in the grass, of glory in the flower ;  
     We will grieve not, rather find 180  
     Strength in what remains behind ;  
     In the primal sympathy  
     Which having been must ever be,  
     In the soothing thoughts that spring  
     Out of human suffering, 185  
     In the faith that looks through death,  
 In years that bring the philosophic mind.

## XI

And O, ye Fountains, Meadows, Hills, and Groves  
 Think not of any severing of our loves !  
 Yet in my heart of hearts I feel your might ;— 190

I only have relinquished one delight  
 To live beneath your more habitual sway.  
 I love the Brooks which down their channels fret,  
 Even more than when I tripped lightly as they ;  
 The innocent brightness of a new-born Day 95  
     Is lovely yet ;  
 The Clouds that gather round the setting sun  
 Do take a sober colouring from an eye  
 That hath kept watch o'er man's mortality ;  
 Another race hath been, and other palms are won. 200  
 Thanks to the human heart by which we live,  
 Thanks to its tenderness, its joys, and fears,  
 To me the meanest flower that blows can give  
 Thoughts that do often lie too deep for tears.

## 24. THE LEECH-GATHERER

### *Or, Resolution and Independence*

THERE was a roaring in the wind all night :  
 The rain came heavily and fell in floods ;  
 But now the sun is rising calm and bright ;  
 The birds are singing in the distant woods ;  
 Over his own sweet voice the Stock-dove broods ; 5  
 The Jay makes answer as the Magpie chatters ;  
 And all the air is filled with pleasant noise of waters.

All things that love the sun are out of doors ;  
 The sky rejoices in the morning's birth ;  
 The grass is bright with rain-drops ;—on the moors 10  
 The Hare is running races in her mirth ;  
 And with her feet she from the plashy earth  
 Raises a mist ; that, glittering in the sun,  
 Runs with her all the way, wherever she doth run.

I was a traveller then upon the moor ; 15  
 I saw the Hare that raced about with joy :  
 I heard the woods and distant waters roar :  
 Or heard them not, as happy as a boy :  
 The pleasant season did my heart employ :

My old remembrances went from me wholly ; 20  
And all the ways of men, so vain and melancholy !

But, as it sometimes chanceth, from the might  
Of joy in minds that can no further go,  
As high as we have mounted in delight  
In our dejection do we sink as low, 25  
To me that morning did it happen so ;  
And fears and fancies thick upon me came ;  
Dim sadness—and blind thoughts, I knew not, nor could  
name.

I heard the Sky-lark warbling in the sky ;  
And I bethought me of the playful Hare : 30  
Even such a happy child of earth am I ;  
Even as these blissful creatures do I fare ;  
Far from the world I walk, and from all care ;  
But there may come another day to me—  
Solitude, pain of heart, distress, and poverty. 35

My whole life I have lived in pleasant thought,  
As if life's business were a summer mood :  
As if all needful things would come unsought  
To genial faith, still rich in genial good :  
But how can He expect that others should 40  
Build for him, sow for him, and at his call  
Love him, who for himself will take no heed at all ?

I thought of Chatterton, the marvellous Boy,  
The sleepless Soul that perished in his pride ;  
Of Him who walked in glory and in joy 45  
Following his plough, along the mountain-side :  
By our own spirits are we defied ;  
We Poets in our youth begin in gladness ;  
But thereof comes in the end despondency and madness.

Now, whether it were by peculiar grace, 50  
A leading from above, a something given,  
Yet it befel, that, in this lonely place,  
When I with these untoward thoughts had striven,  
Beside a pool bare to the eye of heaven  
I saw a Man before me unawares : 55  
The oldest man he seemed that ever wore grey hairs.



As a huge Stone is sometimes seen to lie  
 Couched on the bald top of an eminence ;  
 Wonder to all who do the same espy,  
 By what means it could thither come, and whence ; 60  
 So that it seems a thing endued with sense :  
 Like a Sea-beast crawled forth, that on a shelf  
 Of rock or sand reposes, there to sun itself ;

Such seemed this Man, not all alive nor dead,  
 Nor all asleep—in his extreme old age : 65  
 His body was bent double, feet and head  
 Coming together in life's pilgrimage ;  
 As if some dire constraint of pain, or rage  
 Of sickness felt by him in times long past,  
 A more than human weight upon his frame had cast. 70

Himself he propped, his body, limbs, and face,  
 Upon a long grey Staff of shaven wood :  
 And, still as I drew near with gentle pace,  
 Upon the margin of that moorish flood  
 Motionless as a Cloud the Old-man stood ; 75  
 That heareth not the loud winds when they call ;  
 And moveth all together, if it move at all.

At length, himself unsettling, he the Pond  
 Stirred with his Staff, and fixedly did look  
 Upon the muddy water, which he conned, 80  
 As if he had been reading in a book ;  
 And now a stranger's privilege I took ;  
 And, drawing to his side, to him did say,  
 "This morning gives us promise of a glorious day."

A gentle answer did the Old-man make, 85  
 In courteous speech which forth he slowly drew :  
 And him with further words I thus bespake,  
 "What occupation do you there pursue ?  
 This is a lonesome place for one like you."  
 He answered, while a flash of mild surprise 90  
 Broke from the sable orbs of his yet vivid eyes.

His words came feebly, from a feeble chest,  
 But each in solemn order followed each,  
 With something of a lofty utterance drest—  
 Choice word and measured phrase, above the reach 95

Of ordinary men ; a stately speech ;  
Such as grave livers do in Scotland use,  
Religious men, who give to God and Man their dues.  
He told, that to these waters he had come  
To gather Leeches, being old and poor : 100  
Employment hazardous and wearisome !  
And he had many hardships to endure ;  
From pond to pond he roamed, from moor to moor ;  
Housing, with God's good help, by choice or chance ;  
And in this way he gained un honest maintenance. 105  
The Old-man still stood talking by my side ;  
But now his voice to me was like a stream  
Scarce heard ; nor word from word could I divide ;  
And the whole Body of the Man did seem  
Like one whom I had met with in a dream ; 110  
Or like a man from some far region sent,  
To give me human strength, by apt admonishment.  
My former thoughts returned : the fear that kills ;  
And hope that is unwilling to be fed ;  
Cold, pain, and labour, and all fleshly ills ; 115  
And mighty Poets in their misery dead.  
—Perplexed, and longing to be comforted,  
My question eagerly did I renew,  
“How is it that you live, and what is it you do ?”  
He with a smile did then his words repeat ; 120  
And said, that, gathering Leeches, far and wide  
He travelled ; stirring thus about his feet  
The waters of the Pools where they abide.  
“Once I could meet with them on every side ;  
But they have dwindled long by slow decay ; 125  
Yet still I persevere, and find them where I may.”  
While he was talking thus, the lonely place,  
The Old-man's shape, and speech, all troubled me :  
In my mind's eye I seemed to see him pace  
About the weary moors continually, - 130  
Wandering about alone and silently.  
While I these thoughts within myself pursued,  
He, having made a pause, the same discourse renewed.  
And soon with this he other matter blended,  
Cheerfully uttered, with demeanour kind, 135

But stately in the main ; and when he ended,  
 I could have laughed myself to scorn to find  
 In that decrepit Man so firm a mind.  
 "God," said I, "be my help and stay secure ;  
 I'll think of the Leech-gatherer on the lonely moor !" 140

## 25. THE GREEN LINNET

BENEATH these fruit-tree boughs that shed  
 Their snow-white blossoms on my head,  
 With brightest sunshine round me spread  
     Of spring's unclouded weather,  
 In this sequestered nook how sweet 5  
 To sit upon my orchard-seat !  
 And birds and flowers once more to greet,  
     My last year's friends together.  
 One have I marked, the happiest guest  
 In all this covert of the blest ; 10  
 Hail to Thee, far above the rest  
     In joy of voice and pinion !  
 Thou, Linnet ! in thy green array,  
 Presiding Spirit here to-day,  
 Dost lead the revels of the May ; 15  
     And this is thy dominion.  
 While birds, and butterflies, and flowers,  
 Make all one band of paramours,  
 Thou, ranging up and down the bowers,  
     Art sole in thy employment : 20  
 A Life, a Presence like the Air,  
 Scattering thy gladness without care  
 Too blest with any one to pair ;  
     Thyself thy own enjoyment.  
 Amid yon tuft of hazel trees 25  
 That twinkle to the gusty breeze,  
 Behold him perched in ecstasies,  
     Yet seeming still to hover ;  
 There ! where the flutter of his wings  
 Upon his back and body flings 30  
 Shadows and sunny glimmerings,  
     That cover him all over.

My dazzled sight he oft deceives,  
 A brother of the dancing leaves ;  
 Then flits, and from the cottage-eaves 35  
     Pours forth his song in gushes :  
 As if by that exulting strain  
 He mocked and treated with disdain  
 The voiceless Form he chose to feign,  
     While fluttering in the bushes. 40

## 26. THE SOLITARY REAPER

BEHOLD her, single in the field,  
 Yon solitary Highland Lass !  
 Reaping and singing by herself ;  
 Stop here, or gently pass !  
 Alone she cuts, and binds the grain, 5  
 And sings a melancholy strain ;  
 O listen ! for the Vale profound  
 Is overflowing with the sound.  
 No Nightingale did ever chant  
 So sweetly to reposing bands 10  
 Of Travellers in some shady haunt  
 Among Arabian sands : ✓  
 A voice so thrilling ne'er was heard  
 In spring-time from the Cuckoo-bird,  
 Breaking the silence of the seas  
 Among the farthest Hebrides.  
 Will no one tell me what she sings ?  
 Perhaps the plaintive numbers flow  
 For old, unhappy, far-off things,  
 And battles long ago : 20  
 Or is it some more humble lay,  
 Familiar matter of to-day ?  
 Some natural sorrow, loss, or pain,  
 That has been, and may be again ! ✓  
 Whate'er the theme, the Maiden sang 25  
 As if her song could have no ending ;  
 I saw her singing at her work,  
 And o'er the sickle bending ;—

I listened till I had my fill,  
 And when I mounted up the hill, 30  
 The music in my heart I bore,  
 Long after it was heard no more.

## 27. THE AFFLICTION OF MARGARET

WHERE art thou, my beloved Son,  
 Where art thou, worse to me than dead ?  
 Oh find me, prosperous or undone !  
 Or, if the grave be now thy bed,  
 Why am I ignorant of the same 5  
 That I may rest ; and neither blame  
 Nor sorrow may attend thy name ?

Seven years, alas ! to have received  
 No tidings of an only child ;  
 To have despaired, and have believed, 10  
 And be for evermore beguiled ;  
 Sometimes with thoughts of very bliss !  
 I catch at them, and then I miss ;  
 Was ever darkness like to this ?

He was among the prime in worth, 15  
 An object beauteous to behold ;  
 Well born, well bred ; I sent him forth  
 Ingenuous, innocent, and bold :  
 If things ensued that wanted grace,  
 As hath been said, they were not base ; 20  
 And never blush was on my face.

Ah ! little doth the Young-one dream,  
 When full of play and childish cares,  
 What power is in his wildest scream,  
 Heard by his Mother unawares ! 25  
 He knows it not, he cannot guess :  
 Years to a mother bring distress ;  
 But do not make her love the less.

Neglect me ! no, I suffered long  
 From that ill thought ; and, being blind, 30  
 Said, "Pride shall help me in my wrong :  
 Kind mother have I been, as kind

As ever breathed" : and that is true ;  
I've wet my path with tears like dew,  
Weeping for him when no one knew. 35

My Son, if thou be humbled, poor,  
Hopeless of honour and of gain,  
Oh ! do not dread thy mother's door ;  
Think not of me with grief and pain ;  
I now can see with better eyes ; 40  
And worldly grandeur I despise,  
And fortune with her gifts and lies.

Alas ! the fowls of Heaven have wings,  
And blasts of Heaven will aid their flight ;  
They mount—how short a voyage brings 45  
The wanderers back to their delight !  
Chains tie us down by land and sea ;  
And wishes, vain as mine, may be  
All that is left to comfort thee.

Perhaps some dungeon hears thee groan, 50  
Maimed, mangled by inhuman men ;  
Or thou upon a desert thrown  
Inheritest the Lion's den ;

Or hast been summoned to the deep,  
Thou, Thou and all thy mates, to keep 55  
An incommunicable sleep.

I look for Ghosts ; but none will force  
Their way to me :—'tis falsely said  
That there was ever intercourse  
Between the living and the dead ; 60  
For, surely, then I should have sight  
Of Him I wait for day and night,  
With love and longings infinite.

My apprehensions come in crowds ;  
I dread the rustling of the grass ; 65  
The very shadows of the clouds

Have power to shake me as they pass ;  
I question things, and do not find  
One that will answer to my mind ;  
And all the world appears unkind. 70

Beyond participation lie  
My troubles, and beyond relief :

If any chance to heave a sigh,  
 They pity me, and not my grief.  
 Then come to me, my Son, or send  
 Some tidings that my woes may end ;  
 I have no other earthly friend !

75

## 28. DAFFODILS

I WANDERED lonely as a Cloud  
 That floats on high o'er vales and hills,  
 When all at once I saw a crowd,  
 A host of golden Daffodils ;  
 Beside the Lake, beneath the trees,  
 Fluttering and dancing in the breeze.

5

Continuous as the stars that shine  
 And twinkle on the milky way,  
 They stretched in never-ending line  
 Along the margin of a bay :  
 Ten thousand saw I at a glance,  
 Tossing their heads in sprightly dance.

10

The waves beside them danced, but they  
 Out-did the sparkling waves in glee :—  
 A poet could not but be gay,  
 In such a jocund company ;  
 I gazed—and gazed—but little thought  
 What wealth the show to me had brought :

15

For oft, when on my couch I lie  
 In vacant or in pensive mood,  
 They flash upon that inward eye  
 Which is the bliss of solitude ;  
 And then my heart with pleasure fills,  
 And dances with the Daffodils.

20

## 29. SHE WAS A PHANTOM OF DELIGHT

SHE was a Phantom of delight  
 When first she gleamed upon my sight ;  
 A lovely Apparition, sent

To be a moment's ornament ;  
 Her eyes as stars of Twilight fair :  
 Like Twilight's, too, her dusky hair ;  
 But all things else about her drawn  
 From May-time and the cheerful Dawn ;  
 A dancing Shape, an Image gay,  
 To haunt, to startle, and waylay. 10

I saw her upon nearer view,  
 A Spirit, yet a Woman too !  
 Her household motions light and free,  
 And steps of virgin liberty ;  
 A countenance in which did meet 15  
 Sweet records, promises as sweet ;  
 A Creature not too bright or good  
 For human nature's daily food ;  
 For transient sorrows, simple wiles,  
 Praise, blame, love, kisses, tears, and smiles. 20

And now I see with eye serene  
 The very pulse of the machine ;  
 A Being breathing thoughtful breath,  
 A Traveller between life and death ;  
 The reason firm, the temperate will, 25  
 Endurance, foresight, strength, and skill ;  
 A perfect Woman, nobly planned,  
 To warn, to comfort, and command ;  
 And yet a Spirit still, and bright  
 With something of an angel light. 30

### 30. ODE TO DUTY

*"Jam non consilio bonus, sed more eo perductus, ut non  
 tantum recte facere possim, sed nisi recte facere non possim."*

STERN Daughter of the Voice of God !  
 O Duty ! if that name thou love  
 Who art a light to guide, a rod  
 To check the erring, and reprove ;  
 Thou, who art victory and law 5  
 When empty terrors overawe ;





And fragrant y footing treads ;  
 Thou dost preserve the Stars from wrong ;  
 And the most ancient Heavens, through Thee, are  
 fresh and strong.

To humbler functions, awful Power ! 50

I call thee : I myself commend

Unto thy guidance from this hour ;

Oh, let my weakness have an end !

Give unto me, made lowly wise,

The spirit of self-sacrifice ; 55

The confidence of reason give ;

And in the light of truth thy bondman let me live !

### 31. ELEGIAC STANZAS

*[Suggested by a Picture of Peele Castle, in a Storm,  
 Painted by Sir George Beaumont]*

I was thy neighbour once, thou rugged Pile !  
 Four summer weeks I dwelt in sight of thee :  
 I saw thee every day ; and all the while  
 Thy Form was sleeping on a glassy sea.

So pure the sky, so quiet was the air ! 5

So like, so very like, was day to day !

Whene'er I looked, thy Image still was there,  
 It trembled, but it never passed away.

How perfect was the calm ! it seemed no sleep ;

No mood, which season takes away, or brings : 10

I could have fancied that the mighty Deep  
 Was even the gentlest of all gentle things.

Ah ! THEN, if mine had been the Painter's hand,

To express what then I saw ; and add the gleam,

The light that never was, on sea or land, 15

The consecration, and the Poet's dream ;

I would have planted thee, thou hoary Pile,

Amid a world how different from this !

Beside a sea that could not cease to smile ;

On tranquil land, beneath a sky of bliss. 20

A Picture had it been of lasting ease,

Elysian quiet, without toil or strife ;

No motion but the moving tide, a breeze,  
Or merely silent Nature's breathing life.

Such, in the fond illusion of my heart, 25  
Such Picture would I at that time have made  
And seen the soul of truth in every part,  
A steadfast peace that might not be betrayed.

So once it would have been,—'tis so no more ; 30  
I have submitted to a new control :  
A power is gone, which nothing can restore :  
A deep distress hath humanised my Soul.

Not for a moment could I now behold  
A smiling sea, and be what I have been : 35  
The feeling of my loss will ne'er be old ;  
This, which I know, I speak with mind serene.

Then, Beaumont, Friend ! who would have been  
the Friend  
If he had lived, of Him whom I deplore,  
This work of thine I blame not, but commend ; 40  
This sea in anger, and that dismal shore.

O 'tis a passionate Work—yet wise and well,  
Well chosen is the spirit that is here ;  
That Hulk which labours in the deadly swell,  
This rueful sky, this pageantry of fear !

And this huge Castle, standing here sublime, 45  
I love to see the look with which it braves,  
Cased in the unfeeling armour of old time,  
The lightning, the fierce wind, and trampling waves.

Farewell, farewell the heart that lives alone,  
Housed, in a dream, at distance from the Kind ! 50  
Such happiness, wherever it be known,  
Is to be pitied ; for 'tis surely blind.

But welcome fortitude, and patient cheer,  
And frequent sights of what is to be borne !  
Such sights, or worse, as are before me here.— 5  
Not without hope we suffer and we mourn.

## 32. LAODAMEIA

"WITH sacrifice, before the rising morn  
 Performed, my slaughtered Lord have I required ;  
 And in thick darkness, amid shades forlorn,  
 Him of the infernal Gods have I desired :  
 Celestial pity I again implore :— 5  
 Restore him to my sight—great Jove, restore !"

So speaking, and by fervent love endowed  
 With faith, the Suppliant heavenward lifts her hands :  
 While, like the sun emerging from a cloud,  
 Her countenance brightens—and her eye expands ; 10  
 Her bosom heaves and spreads, her stature grows ;  
 And she expects the issue in repose.

O terror ! what hath she perceived ?—O joy !  
 What doth she look on ?—whom doth she behold ?  
 Her Hero slain upon the beach of Troy ? 15  
 His vital presence ? his corporeal mould ?  
 It is—if sense deceive her not—'tis He !  
 And a God leads him, winged Mercury !

Mild Hermes spake—and touched her with his wand  
 That calms all fear : "Such grace hath crowned thy  
 prayer, 20  
 Laodameia ! that at Jove's command  
 Thy husband walks the paths of upper air :  
 He comes to tarry with thee three hours' space :  
 Accept the gift, behold him face to face !"

Forth sprang the impassioned Queen her Lord to  
 clasp : 25  
 Again that consummation she essayed :  
 But unsubstantial form eludes her grasp  
 As often as that eager grasp was made.  
 The Phantom parts—but parts to re-unite,  
 And re-assume his place before her sight. 30

"Protesilaos, lo ! thy guide is gone !  
 Confirm, I pray, the vision with thy voice :  
 This is our palace,—yonder is thy throne ;  
 Speak, and the floor thou tread'st on will rejoice,  
 Not to appal me have the Gods bestowed 35  
 This precious boon ; and blest a sad abode."

- "Great Jove, Laodameia ! doth not leave  
 His gifts imperfect :—Spectre though I be,  
 I am not sent to scare thee or deceive ;  
 But in reward of thy fidelity. 40  
 And something also did my worth obtain ;  
 For fearless virtue bringeth boundless gain.
- "Thou knowest, the Delphic oracle foretold  
 That the first Greek who touched the Trojan strand  
 Should die ; but me the threat could not withhold : 45  
 A generous cause a victim did demand ;  
 And forth I leapt upon the sandy plain ;  
 A self-devoted chief—by Hector slain."
- "Supreme of heroes—bravest, noblest, best !  
 Thy matchless courage I bewail no more, 50  
 Which then, when tens of thousands were deprest  
 By doubt, propelled thee to the fatal shore ;  
 Thou found'st—and I forgive thee—here thou art—  
 A nobler counsellor than my poor heart.
- "But thou, though capable of sternest deed, 55  
 Wert kind as resolute, and good as brave ;  
 And he, whose power restores thee, hath decreed  
 That thou should'st cheat the malice of the grave :  
 Redundant are thy locks, thy lips as fair  
 As when their breath enriched Thessalian air, 60
- "No Spectre greets me—no vain Shadow this ;  
 Come, blooming Hero, place thee by my side !  
 Give, on this well-known couch, one nuptial kiss  
 To me, this day, a second time thy bride !"  
 Jove frowned in heaven : the conscious Parca threw 65  
 Upon those roseate lips a Stygian hue.
- "This visage tells thee that my doom is past ;  
 Know, virtue were not virtue, if the joys  
 Of sense were able to return as fast  
 And surely as they vanish.—Earth destroys 70  
 Those raptures duly—Erebus disdains :  
 Calm pleasures there abide—majestic pains.
- "Be taught, O faithful consort, to control  
 Rebellious passion : for the Gods approve  
 The depth, and not the tumult, of the soul ; 75

A fervent, not ungovernable, love.

Thy transports moderate : and meekly mourn  
When I depart, for brief is my sojourn——”

“Ah, wherefore ?—Did not Hercules by force  
Wrest from the guardian Monster of the tomb 80  
Alcestis, a reanimated corse,  
Given back to dwell on earth in vernal bloom ?  
Medea’s spells dispersed the weight of years,  
And Æson stood a youth ’mid youthful peers.

“The Gods to us are merciful—and they 85  
Yet further may relent : for mightier far  
Than strength of nerve and sinew, or the sway  
Of magic potent over sun and star,  
Is love, though oft to agony distrest,  
And though his favourite seat be feeble woman’s brest. 90

“But if thou goest, I follow——” “Peace !” he said.  
She looked upon him and was calmed and cheered ;  
The ghastly colour from his lips had fled ;  
In his deportment, shape, and mien, appeared  
Elysian beauty, melancholy grace, 95  
Brought from a pensive though a happy place.

He spake of love, such love as spirits feel  
In worlds whose course is equable and pure ;  
No fears to beat away—no strife to heal—  
The past unsigh’d for, and the future sure ; 100  
Spake of heroic arts in graver mood  
Revived, with finer harmony pursued ;

Of all that is most beauteous—imaged there  
In happier beauty : more pellucid streams,  
An ampler ether, a diviner air, 105  
And fields invested with purpureal gleams ;  
Climes which the sun, who sheds the brightest day  
Earth knows, is all unworthy to survey.

Yet there the Soul shall enter which hath earned  
That privilege by virtue.—“Ill,” said he, 110  
The end of man’s existence I discerned,  
Who from ignoble games and revelry  
Could draw, when we had parted, vain delight,  
While tears were thy best pastime day and night ;



And him no mortal effort can detain ;  
Swift, toward the realms that know not earthly day,      155  
He through the portal takes his silent way,  
And on the palace-floor a lifeless corse she lay.

Ah, judge her gently who so deeply loved !  
Her, who in reason's spite, yet without crime,  
Was in a trance of passion thus removed ;      160  
Delivered from the galling yoke of time  
And these frail elements—to gather flowers  
Of blissful quiet 'mid unfading bowers.

—Yet tears to human suffering are due ;  
And mortal hopes defeated and o'erthrown      165  
Are mourned by man, and not by man alone,  
As fondly he believes.—Upon the side  
Of Hellespont (such faith was entertained)

A knot of spiry trees for ages grew  
From out the tomb of him for whom she died ;      170  
And ever, when such stature they had gained  
That Ilium's walls were subject to their view,  
The trees' tall summits withered at the sight :  
A constant interchange of growth and blight !





# NOTES



## NOTES

### 1. TINTERN ABBEY

*(Lines Composed a Few Miles Above)*

1. **Five years** : Since the summer of 1793.
4. "The river Wye," says the poet, "is not affected by the tides a few miles above Tintern."
5. The bed of the Wye near Tintern is very deep.
10. The darker leaves still remain.
11. The orchards look like the tufts of feathers from a distance.
16. **Pastoral farms** : farms for pasture.
20. **vagrant dwellers** : gypsies.
- 26-27. After his last visit to the Wye he spent some time in London where he used to recollect the experience of 1793.
28. The recollected sensations of the earlier experience of the beautiful scene filled him with calm and made him happy. Read refers to the "state of intense sensational awareness excited to a pitch of emotional sensitiveness."
41. The world is unintelligible in itself because it can claim a reality only as the appearance of the spirit. It is also unintelligible because it is full of pain and sorrow, and because it is not self-contained like the spirit. It is a "world not realised," not yet made real.
44. **Corporeal** : bodily.
56. **Sylvan** : flowing through the wooded hills.
58. The thoughts which filled his mind in 1793 are now revived in his mind.
61. There is sadness at the passing away of the youthful spirit, and there is perplexity because he cannot respond to the scene in the same way as before.
67. The poet compares himself with the roe.
- 70-72. This experience is based on the fear of man. The special province of Wordsworth was assimilation of Nature's influences.
- 74-75. Like the roe he used to participate in the activities of Nature. This was a physical or bodily participation. At that

time the physical joys and animal pleasures were sufficient for him.

77-78. See *The Prelude*, 2.421-5.

78. **like a passion** : like something very deeply loved and never forgotten.

81. **appetite** : bodily craving ; that which is considered absolutely necessary for the existence of the body.

87-89. After the previous visit to the Wye he had many disappointments and sorrows. French Revolution and Godwin were given up. The earlier approach to Nature has disappeared. But there is a better reward compensating that loss. He has come to see in Nature a revolution of a spiritual principle operating in and through the Universe.' He has become more and more attached to man, under the influence of Dorothy and Coleridge. That what he gained is abundant is not true. As Bateson put it, the poem "conceals a confession of failure."

105-111. This is the most important discovery in terms of the evolution of his mind. He passed through the ages of sensation and of simple ideas to the age of complex ideas. Nature mysticism has a non-human basis.

108-9. In a note on these lines Wordsworth refers to Young's *Night Thoughts*, 6.423-425 : "and half create the wondrous world they see." These lines actually look backwards to a critical realism based on Locke's philosophy.

114. **genial spirits** : happy feelings.

115. Now the form of address which the poem has becomes clearer. The poem is addressed to the Wye and also to Dorothy. The Wye of 1793 is present in the wild eyes of Dorothy.

120. As De Quincy noted, the eyes of Dorothy "were wild and startling," they "were not soft nor were they fierce and bold."

126. **inform** : mould.

145. It is an irony of fate that Dorothy later on lost her sanity ; and she was given to "solitude, or fear, or pain, or grief".

## 2. EXPOSTULATION AND REPLY

The poem "arose out of a conversation with a friend who was somewhat unreasonably attached to modern books of moral philosophy." The friend may have been Hazlitt or William Taylor, the school-master. The poet pleads for a study of the book of Nature in a mood of "wise passiveness".

- 5-6. The writings of the great men of the past are a torch to the blind generations.
- 8. **to their kind** : to mankind.
- 21. **Powers** : nature's influences.
- 24. The state of the receptive mind. The mind is to be passive.
- 25. The universe around us speaks to us in a powerful and effective language.

### 3. TABLES TURNED

This poem continues the thought of *Expostulation and Reply*. The poet's philosophy of Nature is given here. The impulses of nature educate man and give him higher moral impulses. Compare *Three years she grew*.

- 2. **grow double** : bend with old age.
- 13. **throstle** : song-thrush.
- 21-24. This is a famous stanza outlining a mystic point of view in the language of a missionary.
- 28. Here he is opposing reason and science—the analytical activities.
- 30. We must be passive and receptive.

### 4. THERE WAS A BOY

The boy was William Raincock Rayrigg. He was "a fine, spirited lad", and his elder brother was a fellow student with Wordsworth at Cambridge. See *The Prelude*, 5:364-397. Coleridge received a copy of the poem and observed : "If I had met with these lines in a desert of Africa, I would have at once cried Wordsworth." Here is a sudden revelation of the beauty of the landscape.

There is a contrast between the two paragraphs. The picture of the boy gives him energy and animal spirits. But he lies silent now in the grave.

- 24-25. The starry heavens are reflected in the lake. This is a favourite image with wordsworth.

### 5. STRANGE FITS OF PASSION

The setting of the moon gives rise to a foreboding of the setting of Lucy. He interprets in the light of emotions.

- 25. **fond** : foolish.

### 6. THREE YEARS SHE GREW

Nature will mould the impulses in the proper directions, and she will also regulate the power of reason. She impels us to realise the good and to avoid the evil. Thus she kindles and restrains. Both these are essential.

18. The insensate things are the mountains that have silence.
19. The solemn march of the clouds is majestic.
- 26-30. The sound of the running water fascinates the poet. The principle of assimilation of the environment is central to Plato's theory of education.
31. Delight is a medicine giving life and energy.
- 37-42. Nature made high promises and the glory of these promises was evidently fulfilled. Wordsworth, as Garrod said, did not see any difference between Lucy's perfection and Lucy's death. When Lucy was perfectly educated, she is one with Nature.

### 7. SHE DWELT AMONG UNTRODDEN WAYS

There is a hallucinatory quality about the poem, as Lamb noticed.

1. A way is always trodden. There are no untrodden ways. If there are, they belong to the private world. The birds fly along the untrodden ways. Then Lucy is a kind of bird or fairy.
2. The river Dove rises on the borders of Derby and Staffordshire. It belongs to the public world. The springs are the sources of the river.
- 2-4. If none could praise her, how can anyone be said to love her? She is a spirit.
- 5-6. Again she belongs to the private world of the half-seen violet which is a shy flower hiding itself under the leaves.
- 7-8. The star belongs to the public world. But the only star makes it unique and rare.
- 9-10. If she lived *unknown*, how can anyone *know* that she died? She is a nature spirit. The poet transports us to the land of dreams.
11. Note the significant use of the word "grave".
- 1-12. The poet combines positive and negative ideas, blends the private and public worlds. There is a successfully controlled subjectivity, and its dreamlike quality emerges from a special use of language. Lucy defies phenomenal reality.

### 8. A SLUMBER DID MY SPIRIT SEAL

This is a remarkable poem. It is perfect. The expression is concentrated and beautiful. The last three lines of the first stanza take us to the past. The second stanza speaks of the present. The brevity of the poem makes the tragic passion intense and unbearable.

1. The slumber of the spirit is the result of the great shock. His spirit is paralysed.
2. When she was alive he never had the fear that she would die. The fear of death is the human fear. The poet refuses to think of death and he refuses to face the fact of death.
3. When she was alive, she made him feel that she was immortal. Hence she *appeared* to be a *thing*, not a mortal being.
4. **touch** : influence, control.
- 7-8. Both the poet and his beloved are being rolled round. The poet is the spectator in this process, and his beloved is one with nature. The word *diurnal* lengthens the tragic intensity.
- 1-8. The poem expresses the sudden shock of vision and memory. See *The Prelude*, 7-765 ff.

### 9. LUCY GRAY

The poem was based on an incident narrated by Dorothy. Crabb Robinson states that the poet's aim was "to exhibit poetically entire solitude, and he represents the child as observing the day-moon, which no town or village girl would ever notice." Here is the "spiritualising of the character" brought about by "the imaginative influences" over common life. The poet seeks support for his belief in the immortality of the soul. There is an unadorned simplicity. He relies on the absolute and adequate pathos of the tragedy of a young life lost in the discharge of its ordinary duties.

19. **Minister** : cathedral church.
21. **hook** : a curved iron instrument.
26. **wanton** : sportive.

### 10. RUTH

This poem was once called *The Influence of Nature*. It was suggested "by an account the poet had of a wanderer in



Somersetshire". De Quincey writes : "Wordsworth himself told me, in general terms, that the case which suggested the poem was that of an American lady whose husband forsook her at the very place of embarkation from England, under circumstances and under expectations, upon her part, very much the same as those of Ruth." The lady may very well be the French woman Annette. The influence of Nature is salutary only "so long as she is herself in keeping with man ; when her operations reach that degree of habitual energy and splendour at which her love for her passes into fascination and our admiration into bewilderment, then the fierce and irregular stimulus consorts no longer with the growth of a temperate virtue." Compare this poem with *Three years she grew* and with *The Affliction of Margaret*.

8. **oaten pipe** : pipe made of the straw of oats. The word comes in *Lycidas*.
18. See line 32 of *Three years she grew*.
19. **Georgia** : a subtropical region of the United States.
20. **Casque** : helmet.
22. **cherokees** : a Red Indian tribe.
28. after the end of the war of American Independence (1776-1782).
- 34-36. Nature stimulated only his impulses, not his reason.
49. **rout** : gathering.
67. **Savannahs** : vast plains of undulating grass.
- 69-72. The green islands are like the blue patches of the sky filled with clouds. Both are quiet.
- 121-126. See a very good essay by Aldous Huxley on "Wordsworth in the Tropics".
- 127-132. The stormy scenes and sounds of the tropics developed his stormy or baser passions. This is an unjust and wrong interpretation of Nature.
- 151-156. This prosaic passage comes from the poet's theory.
168. **main** : sea.
195. **prison** : mental hospital.
- 196-199. She sang like Shakespeare's Ophelia.
- 203-4. She imagined a brook and heard its sound.
214. **Tone** : a stream in Somersetshire.
246. **Quantock** : hills in Somersetshire.

## 11. THE FOUNTAIN

Matthew of this poem and of *The Two April Mornings* appears to be the Rev. William Taylor, schoolmaster at Hawkshead. He taught Wordsworth from 1782 to 1786. Wordsworth spoke of Taylor as "our Common friend and Father". The Fenwick note states that Matthew is a synthesis of many persons. Matthew is 72 and full of glee. He can sing. But he has tears. The birds are better than human beings, for they have a happy youth and a pleasant old age. The poet prefers to be his son and Matthew has a new feeling dawning on him. He does not want the poet to be as a son to him. Tenderness and pathos are expressed in the simplest words.

11. **Border-song** : a ballad or song dealing with the stories of love and war connected with the Scottish border.

**Catch** : a song.

20. Matthew is cheerful and philosophical.

- 33-6. He feels the ardour of youth, not its physical vigour. Here we have the "original sentiment".

- 56-7. These are extremely pathetic lines.

## 12. THE TWO APRIL MORNINGS

Matthew and the poet are on a walk. Suddenly the old man exclaimed, "God's will be done." Explaining this he relates his experience at the grave of his daughter Emma. As he turned back from the grave he met a girl of the same age; and this brought back a pain to him. He did not want her to be his daughter for, she too may die. Pater remarks that *Daffodils* and this poem "are distinguished by a certain quaint gaiety of metre, and rival by their perfect execution similar pieces among our own Elizabethan or contemporary French poetry."

20. "rod and line" are used in fishing.

29. **sued** : pursued.

33. The girl died when she was only nine.

- 49-52. Note the similes.

- 55-56. It is God's will that he should be childless. The pathos is that of a mystic.

60. **wilding** : wild apple.

## 13. MICHAEL

This pastoral poem deals with an 80 years old shepherd, his wife, and their only son Luke. The industrious life of the shepherd was ruined because he stood surety for a nephew who lost everything. So he sends Luke to town to make a fortune, and Luke was corrupted there.

- Wordsworth expresses his great sympathy for the industrious and virtuous life of the English shepherds. The poet said, "the character and circumstances of Luke were taken from a family to whom had belonged, many years before, the house we lived in at Town-end." He told Charles Fox: "In the two poems, *The Brothers* and *Michael*, I have attempted to draw a picture of the domestic affections, as I know they exist among a class of men who are now almost confined to the north of England." There is an elemental pathos in the story of Michael. The event described is solemn and weighty. There is a father's love for his son. Michael is "a man of strong mind and lively sensibility," and he embodies "parental affection and love of property." As the poet told Fox, "men who do not wear fine clothes can feel deeply."

2. Greenhead Ghyll is a mountain stream in the Lake Country. Ghyll is "a short, steep, narrow valley with a stream running through it".
17. **straggling heap** : a rambling heap of stones collected for the sheep-fold.
50. **South** : south wind.
51. Give a musical sound from the valleys down below. Dowden thinks that it may be "the sound of the wind under overhanging cliffs and in hollows of the hills.
- 53-4. thought of his flock.
62. The hills, valleys, fields and the like passed into his life and became a part of his blood.
74. What less could they do ?
76. **blind** : instinctive.
78. Here begins the method of Chaucer.
82. **wheels** : spinning-wheels.
83. **antique** : quaint, old-fashioned.
88. **telling over** : counting.
112. **overbrow** : project over.
118. It outlasted months and years.

134. Easedale is near Grasmere. Dumail-Raise is the pass on the way from Grasmere to Keswick.
- 148-9. Disturbed feelings about what would happen to the child when they died.
153. Nursed him like a woman.
168. **clip** : shearing.
188. not completely helpful and not even troublesome, but something between the two.
200. **emanations** : lively spirits.
214. Was made to pay the debt because he stood surety.
229. **had been** would have been.
- 257 : Richard Batemen rebuilt the Ings Chapel in 1743.
265. **overlook** : supervise.
298. **jocund** : joyful.
323. "A sheepfold in those mountains was an unroofed building of stone-walls, generally placed by a brook."
373. **burthened** : mortgaged.
402. **corner-stone** : the corner of the foundation.
413. **covenant** : mutual agreement.
- 448-466. There is a quiet certainty of thought and feeling. The pathos becomes quiet and simple.
477. The ground containing the cottage came under the plough.

#### 14. THE SPARROW'S NEST

The poet refers to his sister as Emmeline. The terrace wall at the end of the garden of his father's house at Cockermouth was full of rose bushes. This gave an "almost impervious shelter to birds that built their nests there."

#### 15. ALICE FELL

The experience of Graham of Glasgow gave rise to this poem. It has beauty and unadorned simplicity. The pathos of the situation is revealed effectively. We find the imagination transforming common life.

1. Postboy is one who drives the horses of a carriage called post-chaise.
55. **host** : landlord of the inn.
57. **duffil** : a thick rough woollen cloth.

## 16. TWO VOICES ARE THERE

Wordsworth wrote various kinds of sonnets : political sonnets (69), miscellaneous ones (121), sonnets on the River Duddon (34), ecclesiastical sonnets (132), and others. The petrarchan form of the sonnet was followed by Milton, and Wordsworth follows Milton. But he is not as rigid as Milton in the octave ; and the Wordsworthian sonnet does not break the meaning into two halves.

The present sonnet expresses the "thoughts of a Briton on the subjugation of Switzerland". France invaded Switzerland in 1798, and in 1802.

- 1-4. The seafaring and the mountainous nations have a passionate love of liberty. England belongs to the first group, and Switzerland to the second.
5. The tyrant was Napoleon.
7. **Thou** : Liberty.
10. to that which is still left to the music of the sea, to England.

## 17. THE WORLD IS TOO MUCH WITH US

This is a reflective sonnet and it reveals the approach to a new mythology which the modern poet needs. Spiritual life disappears and religion becomes a form of deception, if man loses touch with nature. He finds his contemporaries to be busy with materialistic pursuits. Instead of belonging to the society of such nominal Christians, he would prefer to be a Pagan Greek and see everything as a physical entity and also as the mask of the spirit.

2. Cf. "What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his soul ?"
8. **We are out of tune** : We have no feeling.
11. **So might I** : so that I might.
- 13-14. Proteus was the old man of the sea who could assume any form he liked. He had the gift of prophecy. Triton tended the flocks of Neptune, and he is said to blow a conch-shell which is twisted into a Curve.
- 9-14. This reflective sonnet bursts forth suddenly like a flame on a hill-top. The way in which a modern poet can create nature-myths is presented here, and it is worked out more elaborately in the fourth book of *The Excursion*. It is an irony that the

poet who wanted to be a Pagan Greek knew little of Greek literature and turned to be a more orthodox Christian. Wordsworth had in him more of the Roman severity.

### 18. MILTON ! THOU SHOULDST BE LIVING

Wordsworth often prided in comparing himself with Milton whom he admired most. Milton represented to him the lofty and austere ideals of conduct.

3. church, army, and literature.
4. England's halls and bowers once gave great heroes. Wordsworth refers to the heroes and heroines.
8. **manners** : morality, virtue.  
**virtue** : maliness, moral strength.
9. Milton had nothing to do with the licentious society of the Restoration. He expressed his opinions freely and courageously. The light of his thoughts illumined even a corrupt society.
10. Wordsworth admired the grand, sonorous, and majestic blank verse of Milton.
14. Milton did not hate the drudgery of the work of a Latin secretary or that of a school teacher.

### 19. UPON WESTMINSTER BRIDGE

This sonnet presents the picture of the peaceful beauty of sunrise. It is a descriptive poem. He is attracted by the sleeping London. This is not a reflective poem. It has a gravity of sentiment and is compact.

4. London is like a bridge decorated in her morning beauty. See *Psalms*, 4:1-2.
6. a quick survey of the sights of the city. The dome refers to St. Paul's.
- 9-10. The city is more beautiful than hills and valleys only in the morning.
12. The river is the Thames.
13. **mighty heart** : the great noise and activity of London.
- 13-14. The poet reveals his restrained fancy and singleness of expression. Note the emphasis on silence.

## 20. IT IS A BEAUTEOUS EVENING

This sonnet was "Composed upon the Beach near Calais" in 1802. It gives the peaceful sunset over the sea. Wordsworth came to Calais to meet Annette Vallon who bore him a daughter called Caroline. The girl was ten years old at this time. The sonnet reveals the sweet calm and the healing power of Wordsworth's poetry. This is one of the flawless sonnets of the poet.

3. as calm as a nun praying with breathless concentration.
4. **dear child** : dear Caroline.
12. **liest in Abraham's bosom** : have the blessedness of heaven.
14. She is pure and holy, but does not know it. See *Immortality Ode*, 67, and *Ode to Duty*, 14.

## 21. TO THE CUCKOO

The Cuckoo is a forerunner of the new season of freshness, peace, and joy. Composed on March 23 to 26, 1802, it is a good introduction to the *Immortality Ode*. The bird comes to the poet as a *voice*, not as a presence. There is, he says, "an imaginative influence in the voice of the Cuckoo, when that voice has taken possession of a deep mountain valley".

- 3-4 Wordsworth writes, "This concise interrogation characterises the seeming ubiquity of the voice of the Cuckoo, and dispossesses the creature almost of corporeal existence."
7. See *The Excursion*, 2:345-8.
12. **visionary** : full of visions.
- 23-24. The bird is dearer because it is a mystery and a dream never realised.
27. **beget** : recreate in imagination.
- 29-32. The bird's voice transforms this world which is a vale of tears into a fairy world of spirit.

## 22. RAINBOW

These lines preceded the *Immortality Ode* which has for its motto and substance the last three lines of the present poem. There is the continuity of the spirit throughout a man's life. The spirit of the child is potentially filled with the entire

future history of man. The child compels us to believe in our relation to the unseen spiritual world. The poet finds the supernatural in the natural world.

6. Before he loses his sense of the mystery and beauty of Nature, he would gladly prefer to die.
- 8-9. He wishes that his entire life is unified by the bond of natural affection.
9. **piety** : filial affection, primary affection. Man should regard the child as he would his father.

### 23. ODE ON INTIMATIONS OF IMMORTALITY

(From *Recollections of Childhood*)

Wordsworth remarked : "Two years at least have passed between the writing of the first four stanzas and the remaining parts . . . . Nothing was more difficult for me in childhood than to admit the notion of death as applicable to my own being . . . . I used to brood over the stories of Enoch and Elijah, and almost persuade myself that, whatever might become of others, I should be translated in something of the same way to heaven . . . . To that dream-like vividness and splendour, which invests objects of sight in childhood, every one, I believe, if he could look back, would bear testimony, and I need not dwell upon it here." The note proceeds to offer a half-hearted and unconvincing attempt to reconcile his Christian orthodoxy with the idea of pre-existence expressed in the poem. As Stopford Brooke said, "the theology of Wordsworth was far wider in his poetry than in his opinion."

The main idea of the poem came from Plato through Coleridge. Vaughan's *Retreat* was another source. Wordsworth emphasises the presence of purity in childhood. The idea of immortality appears in his *We are Seven*, *Lucy Gray* and elsewhere.

- 1-9. Gravity of the situation is stated.
4. See lines 4-5 of the sonnet on *Westminster Bridge*.
5. What we see in a dream has a brilliance which is a little vague but beautiful.
- 10-18. Nature is objective.
- 12-13. Joy is the central principle of imagination. The moon has joy.



- 14-15. The images of reflection are frequent in Wordsworth and Shelley.
18. See line 9.
- 19-35. Spring appears.
28. **wrong** : do injustice to.
- 32-35. See lines 67-75 of *Tintern Abbey*.
- 35-37. There is a "ceaseless intercommunion" of the things in Nature.
38. **Jubilee** : season of gladness.
- 39-40. The Greek and Roman participants crowned themselves with flowers or with leaves of laurel.
54. Pansy is the flower of thought, of pensive meditation.
- 56-57. Cf. *The Prelude*, 12:272-86.
58. Birth is coming away from our divine home, and hence it is falling asleep. Thereby we tend to forget our past.
59. Our life's star is the soul.
- 60-61. Here is the idea of the transmigration of the soul.
64. The soul brings with it a heavenly radiance.
65. The soul has a divine origin and it is identical with the divine spirit.
67. See Plato's *Phaedo*, 62.
71. **east** : source of light.
73. **Vision splendid** : celestial gleam.
74. **way** : way to manhood.
- 77-84. The tone is ironical.
78. Compare the relation between Purusha and Prakriti in Sankhya philosophy.
- 85-107. This is a weak stanza.
86. **pigmy** : dwarf.
- 90-2. The objects are arranged to embody his idea of the image of life.
103. **humorous stage** : stage where the different characters and dispositions are represented. See *As You Like It*, 2:7.
109. **immensity** : eternity and infinity.
129. **embers** : ashes.
- 132ff. This is the recovery stanza wherein we have the transition from the natural to the moral world. See *The Prelude*, 1:357-400. Fear begets surprise, and this gives rise to exaltation, a sense of enhanced life.
141. The poet states that as you reflect you are convinced of the unreality of the external world.

143. The external world appears to vanish into unreality.  
 146-7. See *The Prelude* 1:395-7.  
 163. **Immortal Sea** : The Sea of Spiritual life.  
 181. **primal sympathy** : early sympathy or primary affections felt by the child.  
 192. **fret** : eat away.  
 194. **one delight** : old visionary power.  
 195. Companionship with nature is longed for.  
 199. The poet has another experience. It is as strenuous as that of winning an olympic race. There we have spiritual prizes. The sun completed his race, and his goal is setting. Man's setting is death.  
 205-7. Here ends the poem of comfort and encouragement. Actually the poem comes to deal with the problem of mortality.

#### 24. THE LEECH-GATHERER OR RESOLUTION AND INDEPENDENCE

This poem was begun in 1802 May and completed on June 3, 1802. It was intended to be a reply to Coleridge's verse letter' to Sara Hutchinson. The meeting with the leech-gatherer took place on Sept. 26, 1800. After the first four stanzas of the *Immortality Ode* he heard Coleridge's poem and was disturbed. In a letter of June 14, 1802 he wrote : "I describe myself as having been exalted to the highest pitch of delight by the joyousness and beauty of Nature ; and then as depressed even in the midst of those beautiful objects, to the lowest dejection and despair. A young poet in the midst of the happiness of Nature is described as overwhelmed by the thoughts of the miserable reverses which have befallen the happiest of all men, viz., poets. I think of this till I am so deeply impressed with it, that I consider the manner in which I am rescued from my dejection and despair almost as an interposition of Providence." The poem reveals "a lonely place, a pond by which an old man was, far from all house and home", and the figure is "presented in the most naked simplicity possible". The poet continues to say, "I cannot conceive a figure more impressive than that of an old man like this, the survivor of a wife and ten children, travelling alone among the mountains and all lonely places, carrying with him his own fortitude, and the necessities which an unjust state of society has laid upon him."

This poem seeks "to represent the language and sentiment of particular characters". The poet speaks of the dignity and interest of man as man. We find a brooding meditation. There is truth to nature and to passion. The poem opens in a robust style.

- 5-6. Wordsworth confuses the wood-pigeon with the stock-dove. The jay imitates the notes of other birds.
- 8-11. Note the purity of description and simplicity of diction.
12. **plashy** : full of puddles.
15. There is a shift to past tense.
- 29-35. gloomy anticipations come now.
30. **bethought me** : remembered.
- 36-42. Problems of adult living crop up in retrospect.
39. A kind and cheerful man believes in the goodness of others as natural.
43. This stanza gives a transition to poets and their poverty. Chatterton (1752-1770) committed suicide in a fit of despondency. He forged *The Rowley Poems*, beginning to compose them at the age of twelve. He attributed them to a 15th century monk. The fraud was discovered by Tyrwhitt in 1777.
45. The reference is to Robert Burns (1759-1796), the greatest lyric poet of the century. From 1784 to 1788 he was a farmer and then an exciseman.
- 50-56. Here is a turning point. The stanza is a contrast to the preceding poetical stanza.
- 57-70. On these stanzas Wordsworth remarked : "In these images, the conferring, the abstracting, and the modifying powers of the imagination immediately and mediately acting, are all brought into conjunction. The stone is endowed with something of the power of life to approximate it to the sea-beast : and the sea-beast stripped of some of its vital qualities to assimilate it to the stone ; which intermediate image is thus treated for the purpose of bringing the original image, that of the stone, to a nearer resemblance to the figure and condition of the aged Man ; who is divested of so much of the indications of life and motion as to bring him to the point where the two objects unite and coalesce in a just comparison. After what has been said, the image of the cloud need not be commented upon."
75. The cloud is motionless, and it is lonely. Cf. *The Daffodils*.
80. **conned** : examined.

91. burst from his black eyes which were still shining. Arnold printed *Old-man* and Dowden has *yet vivid*.
97. Language which the sober and respectable Scotch use.
98. Cf. "Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's and unto God the things that are God's." The diction of this stanza is discouraging.
106. Among elemental powers the old man finds his own indomitable spirit. He looks ghostlier and has a cheerful indifference. The poet is weak and cowardly. He learns faith and rectitude and the value of the heroic heart.
113. This is an extremely poetic stanza, followed by a prosaic one.
- 126 **may** : to have power, to be able.
139. **stay secure** : firm support.
- 134-140. These lines reconcile the two contrasting aspects of Wordsworth : strength of character with prosaic simplicity, sense of unknown modes of being with blank misgivings.

## 25. THE GREEN LINNET

The poem was suggested by the birds in the orchard of Dove Cottage in Grasmere. Latin *linum* means flax. The linnet is the common finch which feeds on flax seed. Its colour is that of the leaves. It is a *solitary* bird.

- 17-18. Other organisms appear to be busy in making love. But the green linnet lives by himself.
- 25-32. minute and detailed observation.
39. Moving in the bushes he is silent. But he gives a joyous song as he flies to the cottage-eaves.

## 26. THE SOLITARY REAPER

The poem was suggested by a sentence in Thomas Wilkin-son's *Tours to the British Mountains*. The poem has a melancholy. The second stanza is central to the entire poem. The girl is visualised as a bird. The bird image gives a rare beauty to the image of the girl. The poem also emphasises solitude of the girl-bird.

- 9-16. The girl's song is superior to that of the nightingale. But her song has points of similarity with the visionary song of the cuckoo. "The silence of the seas" is more Wordsworthian

than the "Arabian sands". The Hebrides are the rocky isles to the north-west of Scotland.

- 17-20. The poet does not know the meaning of the song, and so he speculates about it. Here we have "the new romantic note". These lines employ open vowels; they are picturesque and suggestive. There is a wishful melancholy. These lines influenced Keats in his *Ode to a Nightingale*.

## 27. THE AFFLICTION OF MARGARET

Wordsworth says that the theme was "taken from the case of a poor widow who lived in the town of Penrith." The famous stanza "Perhaps some dungeon. . ." is one of the finest we have, though it destroys the poet's theory of the language of poetry. This stanza has a sonorous roll and pomp. Ruskin takes up this poem to explain the difference between "historical or simply narrative art" and imaginative art. The poet "assembles the images to excite noble emotions." Coleridge called it "that most affecting composition which no mother, and, if I may judge by my own experience, no parent can read without a tear."

12. When something made her believe that her son returned, this happens.
15. **among the prime in worth** : one the best men having high character.
20. **As hath been said** : as his enemies say.
- 30-33. Earlier she thought that he neglected her. But now she finds the truth. Even in the earlier time she was proud not to complain.
- 50-56. Myers writes : "We observe that the general movement of the lines is unusually slow. They contain a very large proportion of strong accents and long vowels, to suit the tone of deep and despairing sorrow. In six places only out of 28 is the accent weak where it might be expected to be strong, and in each of these cases the omission of a possible accent throws greater weight on the next succeeding accent . . . . The first four lines contain subtle alliteration of the letters *l*, *h*, *m*, and *th*. . . . The words *inheritest* and *summoned* are used to intensify the imagined relation which connects the missing man with the wild beasts who surround him, and the invisible

power which leads ; so that something mysterious and awful is added to his fate. This impression is heightened by the use of the word *incommunicable* in an unusual sense, 'incapable of being communicated with'. . . . The expression 'to keep an incommunicable sleep' for 'to be dead' gives dignity to the occasion by carrying the mind back along a train of literary associations."

56. **incommunicable sleep** : "a sleep that cannot be communicated with" (Myers) ; "a sleep that can make no communication" (Dowden). There is the solitude and isolation of sleep.
- 64-70. The diction of this stanza comes from Wordsworth's theory.

## 28. DAFFODILS

Wordsworth and his sister saw the Daffodils on April 15, 1802. Dorothy's account is beautifully rendered here in 1804. The poem presents the vision of the *dancing* daffodils. This is a vision of joy, of bliss. Out of this vision he derives ethical and spiritual lessons. The second stanza was added later, and it is central to the poem.

1. Note the loneliness of the cloud.
2. The poet always uses the verb *float* with the cloud.
3. The flowers were seen gradually as a *crowd*, as a *host* (of army) as *stars*, and as a *company*. Note the way in which each successive word transforms the flowers.
4. **golden** : yellow, precious.
10. From the *lake* he moves to the *bay*. Then the flowers belong to his vision.
11. **Ten thousand** : innumerable.
15. The poet is compelled to be gay because in the visionary experience he has only bliss.
16. **jocund** : joyful, cheerful.
17. **gazed** : stared with a blank mind.
18. **wealth** : significance, import.
- 21-22. These were said to be suggested by the poet's wife. *Flash* refers to lighting. The *inward eye* is imagination or vision. Wordsworth claimed that the poet has "the disposition to be affected more than any other men by things absent".

## 29. SHE WAS A PHANTOM OF DELIGHT

The poem as it stands now is about the poet's wife, whom he knew from her childhood. The first stanza deals with her as romantic and beautiful ; the second speaks of her as social and domestic ; and the third finds her moral and spiritual qualities. She is a child, a maid, and a wife ; then she is beautiful as a spirit, free and modest, and finally she is an intellectual and moral power. The three stanzas give her personal appearance, her social virtues, and her inmost character. He admires freedom and independence when these are related to modesty. He praises moral power and a life lived in harmony with Nature.

The poem was originally composed on a highland girl. Later it was transferred to his wife. But it is disastrous to call her a *machine*. There is a tameness in this love.

- 8. bright as May and as the morning.
- 15-16. Her face revealed the goodness of her past and the promise of a happy future.
- 18. the common needs of ordinary life.

## 30. ODE TO DUTY

This *Ode*, says the poet, "is on the model of Gray's *Ode to Adversity*, which is copied from Horace's *Ode to Fortune*. Many a time have I been twitted by my wife and sister for having forgotten this dedication of myself to the stern Law-giver." The poem has a didactic tone, and yet the poet seeks to charge it with passion and imagination. The abstract concept is given a life, and the poet reveals his "power of creating myths". Duty is the "Daughter of the Voice of God", a "nursling of immortality". She has a "benign grace". Wordsworth identifies Duty with Reason and Law. This is the Stoic's idea of Duty. Wordsworth fuses the ideas derived from Seneca, Epictetus, Marcus Aurelius and Lucretius ; and there is a touch of the Jewish idea. The Latin motto reads : "I am no longer good by *policy*, but led by *habit*, to this end, so that not only am I able to do what is right, but I cannot help but do right." This motto comes from Marcus Aurelius. The roots of his being are fixed in a centre of great power.

1. De Quincey says, "the daughter of a voice meant an echo, the original voice being the mother and the reverberation, or secondary, as the daughter." Duty is born of God's will, and man's conscience makes her intelligible to him.
8. Being weak, man wonders whether an easy and pleasant course is not preferable to a harsh one. But duty comes in and stops this doubt.
- 9-12. Some are so happy that they follow the path of duty guided by their instincts. They have no doubts or conflicts. They follow duty without knowing it.
16. Even such a person may at some time go wrong. Then duty will come to his aid.
- 17-24. See the Latin motto. Nothing can be more blessed when duty is a matter of habit. This happens when love leads us with an unerring light and when doing the right thing is a pleasure.
32. **if I may** : there is a lingering doubt in the mind of the poet.
37. Absolute and unrestrained freedom or licence is injurious.
39. change from one to another. The ideals must remain the same.
- 41-42. Duty is stern in her commands, and yet she has a kind appearance.
- 43-48. Because of her beauty all the natural and spiritual things appear and remain beautiful. There is the same moral law operating everywhere.
53. **lowly wise** : spirit of true humility.
55. Here he advocates the obedience to that moral law which his reason says is true.
56. **bondman** : slave.

### 31. ELEGIAC STANZAS

[Suggested by a Picture of Peele Castle, in a Storm, painted by Sir George Beaumont.]

These lines were written soon after the death of the poet's brother. The poet was acquainted with the painter Sir George Beaumont in 1803.

In this poem we find Wordsworth stating his ideas on the function of poetry and fine art. The soul of fine art is in the heart of the artist, in his imagination. The poet sees in the familiar things "a light that never was on sea or land".



The poet sees this light in the picture of Peele Castle. The poet adds "the gleam" which alone confers a value on the poem. It is not nature, but the idea in the soul of the poet that is everything. This is a rejection of his earlier attitude to the relation of Poetry and Nature.

2. During one college vacation he stayed for four weeks at Rampside, near Peele Castle.
- 9-12. The calmness of the sea is not the effect of sleep or that of the season. It is a natural or constant feature of the sea.
13. **then** : at the first time I saw the castle.
- 14-16. The artist does not paint or describe Nature as she is in herself. The virtue of a work of art is to be found in the modifying colours of imagination that transform the original object. What the physical eye sees is recreated by the artist's imagination. These lines express the essential function of poetry.
13. Beaumont's picture shows the castle in a storm.
22. **Elysian quiet** : the calmness of paradise.
- 29-32. cf. "the still sad music of humanity". See *Immortality Ode*, 179-190.
38. **if he** : if my brother John. But John Wordsworth never met Beaumont.
44. **pageantry of fear** : a terrible spectacle.
50. living in an unreal world, away from the society of mankind.

### 32. LAODAMIA

By the time this poem was composed, there was also *The Excursion*. If Wordsworth's great career was over by 1806, here was its last glow. The poem is based on a classical theme, an incident from the Greek camp at the time of the Trojan war. Laodamia, the daughter of Acastus, was the wife of Protesilaus. The first man to land on the Trojan sands will be the first to die in the expedition, said the soothsayers and the Oracle. Protesilaus agreed to be the first to die, so that the Greeks may ultimately win the war. Laodamia, who was married only recently, prayed to the Gods to allow her to talk to her husband's spirit just for three hours. As per this prayer, Hermes brought the spirit of Protesilaus to her. When Protesilaus died a second time, she died with him.

This incident appears in Homer and other Greek poets. Wordsworth read about it in Virgil who mentions it briefly in his *Aeneid*. The character of Protesilaus is based on Euripides' tragedy *Iphigenia in Aulis*. The *Epistle XIII* in Ovid's *Heroides* suggested Laodamia's excessive passion. Wordsworth wanted to give the incident "a loftier tone than has been given to it by any of the Ancients who have treated of it. It cost me more trouble than almost anything of equal length I have witten." Here the sense of duty is made to look superior to the affections or love. Wordsworth may be trying once again to convince himself what he did to Annette was after all the proper thing. The sense of duty takes him to feel at home in the world of Virgil and Seneca. While the other Romantics were moved towards Greece, it is significant to find Wordsworth turning to Rome. The poem is said to be "founded on the affections."

3. **in thick darkness** : at midnight after prayers and sacrifice.
4. **Infernal Gods** : Gods of the lower world of the dead.
5. **celestial** : divine.
6. **Mercury** : The Greek God Hermes was the Roman Mercury, the messenger of the God Zeus (Roman Jupiter). As a messenger he was portrayed with wings, because he had also the wings of healing beside a wand which charms off all obstacles.
7. For a few lines we have the style of Pope.
26. She tried repeatedly to embrace him, and the spirit eluded him. See *Aeneid*, 2:794 and 6:699.
31. The guide is Mercury.
43. The temple of "Apollo at Delphi had a priestess who gave prophecies in the name of the God. Here the Pythian games were held once in four years.
48. Hector was the eldest son of Priam, King of Troy, and the greatest warrior in the Trojan war.
60. Thessaly in northern Greece was the home of Protesilaus.
65. Percae are the fates, the three goddesses of destiny.
66. Styx is a river in the lower world, and *stygian hue* is infernal darkness.
67. The reply of Protesilaus to his wife.
68. **joys of sense** : pleasures of the senses.
71. **Erebus** : Hades, the lower world.
72. After death we have only serene contemplation and a sublime duty.

- 74-5. Here is the central teaching of Wordsworth from 1805 onwards. See *The Excursion*, 1·932-3.
- 79-81. Heracles conquered Cereberus, the three-mouthed dog guarding the gates of Hades, when he brought back Alcestis to life. Alcestis chose to die to prolong the life of her husband Admetus.
- 83-84. Jason's wife Medea, an enchantress, restored to youth Aeson, the father of Jason.
- 86-90. Compare Shelley's *The Flight of Love*, 21-24.
95. Elysium is the heaven to which the souls of the dead go.
- 104-108. The Wordsworthian idea of the happy life after death is given here. The Greeks held that only the happy souls go to Elysium. The large majority go to Hades where we have no "pellucid streams" or "ample ether", or "purpureal gleams". Wordsworth is drawing heavily on *Aeneid*, 6·639-40.
120. Aulis was a port in Boetia. Here the Greek army was not allowed to move by an unfavourable wind, till Iphigenia, the daughter of Agamemnon, was offered as a sacrifice to Artemis.
158. **judge her gently** : pardon her.
164. From *Aeneid*, 1·462 : "There are tears in the affairs of this life, and human sufferings touch the heart." From this line the metre changes to indicate that the poet's reflection begins here.
167. **this side** : European side. The reference is to the straits of Dardanelles between the Aegean Sea and the Sea of Marmora.
- 169-172. The source is Pliny's *Natural History*, 16·44.
171. **Ilium** : Troy.

